

# Building an International Research Collaboration in Early Childhood Education and Care

Background Materials for a Workshop  
funded by the Australian Research  
Alliance for Children and Youth  
(ARACY)

Edited by Deborah Brennan

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## Introduction

*Deborah Brennan, Social Policy Research Centre*

The policy domain of childhood education and care (ECEC) has experienced a huge surge of attention in recent years. However, while national governments have forged ahead with a range of policy initiatives, little comparative research has been undertaken. At the conclusion of its thematic review into ECEC policy and provision in 2006, the OECD called on researchers to use its findings as a springboard for research. In particular, it called for ‘further cross-national work, focusing on ... critical issues and challenges’ including: the rationale for different ways of organizing ECEC policy and provision; the balance of investment between parental leave and services for infants and toddlers; responses to the shortages of skilled and qualified staff; how best to promote parent engagement in ECEC; and how policy can help parents to balance paid work and family life.

In response to this call, an international network of scholars and non-government organisations has been established, generously supported by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), the Academy of the Social Sciences of Australia, the British Academy and the Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW. The aim of the network is to encourage policy-relevant research across and between Australia, the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Sweden. The network also includes strong representation from non-government organisations (NGOs) from each of the countries. This is in keeping with ARACY’s goal of encouraging research that reflects the needs and interests of the policy-making and practitioner communities as well as researchers themselves.

The network fits with the ARACY goals and priorities identified in ‘Research Priorities for Advancing the Wellbeing of Children and Young People: Views from the Research Community’ (Homel 2005). One of the research tasks identified in this report was to ‘carry out a comparison of child, young person and family policies and practices internationally, building on work already done by groups such as the OECD’. This is precisely the intention of the group. It is also in accord with the OECD which has emphasized the ‘need to strengthen knowledge of the range of approaches adopted by different countries, along with the successes and challenges encountered (2001, 7).

The network seeks to:

- build collaborations among researchers and research teams in Australia and overseas;
- generate opportunities for researchers to participate in leading-edge international research networks and strengthen their international research experience;
- build Australian research capability by enhancing existing and developing new collaborations among researchers;
- develop innovative modes of international collaboration; and/or foster participation in global networks (adapted from ARC 2007)

In order to provide some common background for the workshop, two research projects have been supported with ARACY funds (supplemented by the Social Policy Research Centre). These are:

(i) A review of recent academic and policy-relevant literature addressing debates of particular relevance to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The literature is explored thematically, focussing on issues of cross-national interest. As far as possible, this thematic exploration is located within an awareness of more broadly based associated international trends and debates. The literature review was conducted by Fran Press, Charles Sturt University.

(ii) A series of 'Policy Audits' setting out key demographic data and describing the major policies relating to early childhood education and care in the five countries under consideration. (Draft 'terms of reference' for the Policy Audits were sent to all members of the network before being finalised.) The Policy Audits were prepared by Megan Blaxland, a Research Associate at the Social Policy Research Centre. Samantha Ner, a student on placement at the SPRC in 2007, was the primary author of the New Zealand audit. Samantha's initial draft was finalised by Christiane Purcal and Megan Blaxland. Experts from each country provided assistance with the preparation of these documents, offering suggestions for sources and commenting on drafts. For their generosity in assisting in this way, we would like to thank:

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Responsibility for any errors or omissions remains with the authors.

The Literature Review and Policy Audits are intended to provide background material for participants at the February 2008 workshop. They will also be distributed via ARACY networks and, where appropriate, through the non-government organisations associated with this project.

# **1 Trends and debates in ECEC policy: a literature review canvassing policy developments in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom.**

*Fran Press, Charles Sturt University*

## **1.1 Introduction**

Early childhood education and care<sup>1</sup> policy has been the focus of a number of major cross national and national reviews over the past decade. *The OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care*, which considered the arrangement of such provisions across twenty national contexts and has produced two major comparative reports, *Starting Strong I* and *Starting Strong II* is indicative of the interest that has been generated. Related areas of work and family have also been the subject of review, for instance the OECD's series of reports entitled *Babies and Bosses* canvassed issues concerning the provision of parental leave. As Mahon has shown, *Starting Strong* and *Babies and Bosses* took quite different approaches to services for young children, with *Starting Strong* having a major focus on the nature and quality of services for children, and *Babies and Bosses* conceptualising such services primarily as an adjunct to women's labour force participation (Mahon 2007).

This literature review identifies and discusses academic and policy-relevant literature addressing the policy debates of particular relevance to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom. These issues are explored thematically, addressing issues of cross-national interest. As far as possible, this thematic exploration is nested within an awareness of international trends and debates.

The policy considerations put forward in *Starting Strong I*, the first OECD comparative report of early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy, provide the organising themes of this literature review. Such an approach is consistent with the second OECD ECEC review (OECD 2006) which structures its discussion of each country's performance in relation to these eight principles, namely

- A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation
- A strong and equal partnership with the education system
- A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support
- Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure
- A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance
- Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision
- Systemic attention to monitoring and data collection

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<sup>1</sup> Early childhood education and care (ECEC) refers to the suite of formal, non-parental, education and care arrangements available to children before the commencement of formal schooling and includes services such as long day care (centre based and home-based), and pre-school.

- A stable framework and long term agenda for research and evaluation (OECD 2001).

In this review the final two considerations will be discussed together.

Where appropriate, the ten policy considerations which conclude the second report, *Starting Strong II*, are interwoven with this thematic discussion. The ten policy considerations are:

- To attend to the social context of early childhood development;
- To place well-being, early development and learning at the core of ECEC work, while respecting the child's agency and natural learning strategies;
- To create the governance structures necessary for system accountability and quality assurance;
- To develop with the stakeholders broad guidelines and curricular standards across ECEC services;
- To base public funding estimates on achieving quality pedagogical goals;
- To reduce child poverty and exclusion through upstream fiscal, social and labour policies, and to increase resources within universal programmes for children with diverse learning rights;
- To encourage family and community involvement in early childhood services;
- To improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff;
- To provide autonomy, funding and support to early childhood services;
- To aspire to ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy (OECD 2006).

The policy considerations put forth by both reports are closely related, and at times entwined. In broad terms, the first report's considerations emphasise dimensions of policy that build and support a strong and coherent system. Whilst the policy considerations of *Starting Strong II* also address system-wide supports, they also attend closely to those dimensions of policy that support children and their families *within* the system by emphasising 'the social context of early childhood development' (p.6). The second report's attention to children's wellbeing and agency, family and community involvement and 'ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy' might be regarded as a counterweight to a perceived, or potential, trend to frame and evaluate early childhood systems primarily through their potential to enable children to reach narrowly defined, often academic, outcomes. A focus upon children's wellbeing in the present, as well as their developmental outcomes, is arguably a focus that *Starting Strong II* tries to capture.

Please note that throughout this paper, examples may be given of policies from some or all of the reviewed countries, Australia, Canada, NZ, the UK and Sweden, in order to highlight or exemplify specific policy trends. They are not to be read as complete

overviews of each country's policies in the area of discussion. For a more comprehensive account of each country's policy settings, please refer to the accompanying *Policy Audits*.

## **1.2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights on the Child (UNCROC)**

In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. (Article 3.1, UNCROC 1990).

It is appropriate to commence this policy discussion with reference to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights on the Child (UNCROC)*. Since its adoption by the United Nations (UN) in 1989, the Convention has been ratified by over 200 member states, the only exceptions being the United States of America (USA) and Somalia. . UNCROC is the most widely ratified of all UN human rights instruments (Jones 1999). Australia and Sweden both ratified the UNCROC in 1990, Canada in 1991, New Zealand in 1993 and the Convention came into force across the United Kingdom (UK) in 1992. By ratifying the Convention, countries have agreed to respect children's rights and to assess policies and laws affecting children against the articles contained in the Convention.

In 2005, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child released *General Comment No. 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood* (United Nations, 2005). Concerned with the development of a 'positive agenda for rights in early childhood' (p.2) this paper is especially pertinent to a discussion of ECEC policy. The rights of infants and very young children have, in many cases, been interpreted as being primarily those concerned with issues such as health and survival. The broader principles of the Convention, in relation to areas such as participation in decision-making and education, have more usually been applied to older children. The *General Comment* advocates the recognition of young children as rights holders and persons in their own right, 'active members of their families, communities and societies' rather than people in the making waiting to be moulded by adults. It stresses the applicability to young children of rights-related principles such as participation, respect for their 'concerns, interests and points of view', as well as attention to their particular requirements for 'physical nurturance, emotional care and sensitive guidance.....social play, exploration and learning' (p. 3).

Thus the UNCROC is significant to ECEC in multiple ways. It advocates the availability of early childhood services; it asserts that such services should always operate in children's best interests; and it promotes respect for children's agency through the work and purposes of the early childhood setting. The extent to which each country has actively drawn upon the Convention to inform policy and practice in early childhood education and care varies. Sweden boasts a 'highly developed view of the child based on democratic values which gives respect for the child as a person in its own right and a belief in the child's inherent skills and potential' (Korpi, 2000). New Zealand has drawn extensively on the Convention to inform policy developments in early childhood education, particularly its strategic plan for early childhood education (Smith, 2007). The extent to which the UK has embedded UNCROC in policy-making is deeply contested (Children's Rights Alliance 2004).

The degree to which children's rights principles are embedded in government policies appears to be related to how much formal recognition is institutionalised through the creation of ministries for children. For instance, one suggestion of the *OECD Country Note* for the UK was the creation of an Ombudsman for Children to work across relevant ministries to ensure that children's issues were addressed systematically (OECD, 2000). Sweden established the Office of the Children's Ombudsman in 1993. A decade later, New Zealand created a Commissioner for Children and Northern Ireland established a Commissioner for Children and Young People. In 2004, Scotland established a Children's Commissioner; and in 2005, England's first Children's Commissioner was appointed. Neither Australia nor Canada have yet established national children's ministries, although in Australia equivalent Commissions exist in number of States and Territories. Interestingly, Australia did have legislation to establish a Children's Commission at the national level as early as 1974 but the Commission was never established (Brennan, 1994).

### **1.3 The OECD Policy Considerations for ECEC**

#### **A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation**

The shape of children's early care and education has been influenced by a range of policy arenas and imperatives. The organisation of ECEC reflects changes to family and workforce structures, research on children's development and wellbeing, and the impact of broader shifts in economic policy on the provision of services once considered the province of government or the public sector, or indeed, the family itself. The provision of childcare and pre-school services has been linked to strategies to: enable women's participation in the paid labour market and, by association, enable women's citizenship (Dobrowolski and Jenson, 2004); redress disadvantage, particularly educational disadvantage and poverty; reinvigorate communities; and, more recently, has been linked to an enactment of children's rights.

The result is that, for many countries, the ECEC sector is comprised of a number of different service types that are subject to a, sometimes diffuse, set of policies from a range of government departments. This has been identified as problematic for the Australia, Canada and the UK (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004; OECD, 2003; Press and Hayes, 2000). Canadian ECEC was described by its OECD *Country Note* as 'a patchwork of uneconomic, fragmented services' (2003 p.6). The OECD *Country Note* for Australia referred to the 'ad hoc nature' of Australian early childhood policy and noted that the interests of children ran the risk of being subsumed by 'the needs of parents, the workplace, and the economy' (2001 p.37). England's *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* (2004) has sought to address existing splits between childcare and education.

Fragmentation is characteristically found along a number of dimensions. These may include:

- the diversity of services provided, which is often accompanied by divisions of responsibility between different government portfolios;
- the various levels of government (local/municipal; state/provincial; and national) that have a direct policy impact on ECEC (particularly in Australia and Canada);

- discontinuities between ECEC and compulsory schooling;
- discontinuities between ECEC and other areas of family policy, such as parental leave, and welfare to work regimes; and
- the mix of providers – government, not-for-profit non-government organisations, and for-profit businesses and corporations;
- differing standards (regulations, curricula, accreditation) according to jurisdiction and /or type of early childhood service; and
- differing staffing requirements according to jurisdiction and /or type of early childhood service.

In its *Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy* the OECD deliberately adopts the term ‘early childhood education and care’ in order to reinforce the need for a coherent approach to children’s early development and learning (2001). The juxtaposition of ‘education’ and ‘care’ highlights the intimate interrelationship of the care and education of young children (UNESCO, March 2002). According to the OECD (2001), in countries where early childhood policy is based upon a foundational understanding that children are competent learners from birth, divisions between ‘care’ and ‘education’ become meaningless. This rise of the terminology of ‘care and education’ has, to some extent, changed the discourse that surrounds the provision of early childhood services and associated policy. For instance, New Zealand has renamed its childcare centres ‘education and care centres’ (May, 2007); the New South Wales (NSW) Curriculum Framework for Children’s Services states that the interwoven nature of care and education make it ‘inappropriate to label some services, or even parts of the day in a program, as educational and others as care’ (undated, p. 16); Sweden uses the term *förskola* (pre-school) to encompass its full-time centre based services for children aged between 1 and 6 years; and the UK has adopted the term ‘educare’ to describe ‘joined up’ education and childcare to children in the year before school (DfES, 2004). Notwithstanding the adoption of more inclusive terminology, for many jurisdictions the provision of childcare and early education remains divided and thus discrepancies in funding and staffing remain.

In each of the review countries, education and care services for young children take a variety of forms. Long day care (both centre based and family day care), pre-schools / kindergartens, and services specific to Indigenous communities are reasonably typical of the mix. Formal ECEC might be supplemented by programmes that also have a focus upon supporting children’s development and parenting, but require the presence of parents at the service. Such programmes include the New Zealand Playcentres (May 2007), the Family Resource / Support Centres found in parts of Canada (OECD 2003), and supported playgroups in Australia. This mix of service types reflects their varying antecedents with responsibilities typically split between portfolios of education (pre-school) and health and/or welfare (childcare). *Starting Strong II* points out that in liberal market economies (which include the reviewed countries of Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom) ‘younger children are considered to need ‘childcare’ rather than early education’ (p.46) with governments more prepared to assume responsibility for pre-school education (in the one or two years before the commencement of school). For many years, pre-schools have represented governments’ investment in early childhood *education systems* in particular. Although

not all of the jurisdictions within each of the reviewed countries provide universal access to pre-school, many have sought to achieve this goal. However, the 'traditional' structure of pre-school education, where children are offered a limited number of hours per week in the year or two immediately before the commencement of formal school, is not responsive to the working hours of parents. As a result, many children and families who would have once used kindergartens, now use long day care centres and family day care homes instead.

In recognition of the multiplicity of influences upon ECEC policy, *Starting Strong I* recommended governments 'formulate and work with coordinated policy frameworks at centralized and decentralised levels'. In a similar vein, the UN *General Comment* urges 'coordinated, multisectoral strategies in order to ensure that children's best interests are always the starting point for service planning and provision' (p.11). In Australia and Canada, the complexities of federalism mean that coordinated policy frameworks are required to encompass a number of domains. Firstly, there is a need to work toward integrated early childhood education and care; secondly, there is a need to recognise and incorporate the nexus between maternity/parental leave and the provision of early childhood education and care; and thirdly there is a need to strive for congruence and alignment across key policy areas including education, health, work and family, and social welfare (Press, 2006). To achieve coordination the OECD (2006) suggests the establishment of a 'lead ministry that works in cooperation with other departments and sectors' (p.47).

Each of the reviewed countries has introduced changes, often incremental, to address at least some of the divisions and disjunctures previously outlined. Both New Zealand and Sweden are often considered exemplars in this respect with New Zealand integrating ECEC under the Department of Education in 1986 (Meade and Podmore, 2002) and Sweden transferring responsibility for childcare from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science in 1996 (UNESCO, May 2002). These departmental integrations have been consolidated by policy interventions designed to create a coherent and seamless approach to children's early care and education. For example, New Zealand's strategic plan for early childhood education, *Pathways to the future: Nga Huarahi Arataki* had, as a guiding principle, to 'identify and take into account relationships between government policy in early childhood education and other government policy goals, particularly those in education, labour market, health, welfare ...' (Ministry of Education, 2000). One of the 'on the ground' objectives related to this principle was to 'improve the development and educational achievement of children between birth and age eight through forming strong links between ECE services, parent support and development, schools, health and social services' (Pathways to the Future 2003, np).

In 1998, England and Scotland integrated responsibility for all early childhood services within education departments (Kammerman, 2005; Moss 2006). Since that time, the UK has invested a considerable amount of money into early childhood education and integrated Children's Centres have been developed. England's *5 year Strategy for Children and Learners* has set out to consolidate a range of services into Children's Centres so that early education and childcare, family support, health services, employment advice and specialist support are available on a single site, as well as working toward the establishment of a Children's Centre in every community (Glass 2006). A further aim is to integrate childcare and what is referred to as

‘nursery education’ (DfES 2004). All services for children below school age, as well as schools and care services for school aged children are now the responsibility of one local department, Children’s Services, and one central department, the Department for Education and Skills – an approach first heralded in a Government Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, in 2003 (HM Treasury, 2003).

Canada and Australia have released National Agendas for children but these have not directly tackled the systemic divisions in the same way. In 1998 Canada announced a *National Children’s Agenda* which in 2000 resulted in an extension of parental leave provisions and an Early Childhood Development Initiatives Agreement (ECDI) with states and provinces. The ECDI agreements provided funding for improvements in the key areas of: a) healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy, b) parenting and family support; c) early childhood development, learning and care, and d) community supports (Colley, 2006). In October 2007, Australia released a *National Agenda for Early Childhood* (Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), 2007) which was first consulted upon as a draft document in 2004<sup>2</sup>. Australia’s Agenda is described as ‘a framework for action to promote the positive development of all children living in Australia for birth to age eight.’ (p.5, 2007) and, in a similar fashion to Canada’s ECDI agreements, identified four action areas: healthy families; early learning and care; supporting families; and child friendly communities. Unlike Canada however, the Agenda was not considered to be a plan of action, rather it was described as a reference document for all people working with young children and no funding was attached to the achievement of its outcomes. Nor did it seek to reconfigure the various responsibilities of different levels of government and related sectors, although it did advocate joint planning processes. An Indigenous Child Care Plan was released in 2007 (FACSIA 2007a). In line with the National Child Care Strategy the Plan recommends ‘an integrated approach to the delivery of child care, health and broader family support services’ (FACSIA 2007a). The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has identified Early Childhood Development as a priority area, and the National Agenda for Early Childhood included targets for bilateral arrangements for streamlined early childhood arrangements to be facilitated through COAG (Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), 2007). However, it is uncertain as to whether these remain targets under the new COAG arrangements. The most recent COAG meeting (April 2008 identifies ‘training and early childhood’ as priority areas under its ‘productivity agenda’.

In September 2006, the Institute of Child Study’s Integration Network Project, within the University of Toronto, released a discussion document: *How can integration of services for kindergarten aged children be achieved?* (Colley, 2006) in order to provoke and stimulate thought, discussion and presumably, government action, about the integration of care and education services in Canada.

For the UK, New Zealand and Australia, progress toward a systemic approach to ECEC is somewhat confounded by the move to a mixed economy of childcare provision. Whilst most pre-schools have been government run, or managed by

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<sup>2</sup> Since the change of national government at the end of 2007, the National Agenda has been removed from government websites, indicating that it may no longer be relevant to government policy.

publicly funded not-for-profit agencies, the long day care sector is a mixed economy and long day care centres in both Australia and New Zealand are run largely by the for-profit sector, and increasingly by the corporate sector (Brennan, 2007; Mitchell 2002). In the UK the expansion of Children's Centres is to be facilitated by private-public partnerships (Penn, 2007). For-profit provision tends to be stimulated by demand side subsidies to childcare users. These subsidies can take up a significant proportion of public funding allocated to childcare, and increase the likelihood of the nature of childcare being shaped by the market, rather than the social and educational objectives government. At the same time, a number of commentators observe that the for-profit sector and the not-for-profit sector have not always shared the same goals for early childhood policy and, at times, advocate for different outcomes from government policy (Duncan 2007; Penn 2007; Press and Woodrow, 2005). It is important to note, however, that there are significant differences between the Australian states and some, notably South Australia and Victoria, have taken significant steps to overcome the division between education and care in the early years.

### **A strong and equal partnership with the education system**

The disjuncture between children's care, seemingly exemplified by services such as long day care or childcare, and children's early education, seemingly exemplified by pre-school (Wangmann, 1995), is manifest in the way in which much government funding is directed within the early childhood sector, and the split between what might be broadly described as the prior to school sector and the school sector. The care and education split is typified by arrangements for pre-school education that only commence in the year or two before school and which do not generally match the working hours of parents (Sweden, and now New Zealand, are exceptions in this regard). Childcare, on the other hand, is provided for longer hours, but less likely to require the employment of early childhood teachers. As a result, in countries such as Australia, Canada, and the UK, children may find themselves moving between services on any given day, within each week, and from age group to age group as families juggle childcare needs and attendance at pre-school programmes. An additional consequence of the care and education split is that services for children under the age of three are relatively poorly resourced (Bennett, 2003). Thus the *UN General Comment* (2005) notes that existing divisions between education and care are not always in children's best interests.

In calling for ECEC to have a strong and equal partnership with the education system, *Starting Strong 1* envisaged the creation of a unified system that would more comprehensively address the needs of younger children, and 'enable smoother transitions for children, and the recognition of early childhood pedagogy as an important part of the education process' (OECD 2006, p.58). Just as in public schooling, investment in ECEC needs to be regarded as a public good.

A central tenet of the OECD recommendation, however, is that of *equal partnership*. As outlined in the previous section, there are a number of national developments and specific moves within nations designed to streamline the relationships between the formal care and education arrangements for children before school and compulsory schooling. Although the previous section canvassed the advances made as countries have moved to unify ministerial responsibility for prior to school and school services, the creation of a 'strong and equal' partnership, is not solely the product of a unified

ministry. A review of the literature and policy debates of each country highlight the fact that in order for early childhood education to be granted the same status as education systems a number of elements need to be addressed including: increased funding for services in the years before formal school – particularly in the earliest years of children’s lives; upgraded requirements for staffing of services; and respect for early childhood pedagogies. As systems seek partnership and cohesion there is a need to challenge the ‘cultures, traditions and value systems’ (Colley 2006, p.11) vested in existing (or pre-existing) portfolios.

In fact, moves to integrate early childhood services within departments of education have at times been resisted because of fears of the ‘schoolification’ of early childhood services. Petrie describes schoolification as a process of colonisation whereby the expectations and cultures of the school system take over ‘children’s lives, other children’s services, and their workforces’ (2005, 179). To counter this, John Bennett who previously headed the OECD Thematic Reviews, advocates for early childhood education to exert a positive influence on schools. Arguing that the current split results in an overemphasis on cognitive development to the ‘detriment of care and social attachment’, he suggests that schools have much to learn from the approaches and impact of early childhood education in relation to the importance of teacher-child relationships and their caring function (Bennett, 2003; see also Korpi 2005).

Sweden has made remarkable progress in this area, and its experience is frequently used to showcase, not only how this partnership might be achieved in structural terms, but how early childhood approaches to children’s pedagogy might exercise an upward influence on schooling (UNESCO, May 2002). One such manifestation of this impact is that ‘Swedish schools are increasingly seen as places where school-age children are cared for in a holistic manner while their parents are working. More and more, schools are becoming a substitute home for school-age children, as pre-schools have been for younger children, where teachers and childcare workers collaborate to ensure students’ holistic development’ (p.8). The success of the Swedish model is, in large part, the result of deliberate government intention to assure the integrity of early childhood systems within an expanded education department.

### **Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure**

Public investment is recognised as foundational to building an ECEC system that is capable of providing effective support to families and promoting children’s wellbeing and development. Inadequate investment results in tensions between quality, affordability and accessibility, which Wangmann (1995) refers to as the ‘trilemma’. Reminiscent of this, Colley (2006) identifies the following four interrelated issues emerging from a review of Canadian ECEC: financing; access; equity; and quality (p.69). Unfortunately, within this mix of policy pressures, the quality of children’s experiences in ECEC is often subsumed. In response, *Starting Strong II* calls for countries to: ***base public funding estimates on achieving quality pedagogical goals.***

In the main, government investment in ECEC takes two forms:

- Supply side investments which direct funding to: the establishment and operation of government centres (for instance, government provided pre-schools); or to public / non government and not for profit agencies, and

- Demand side investments such as subsidies to families either through direct payments or tax credits (Allen, 2003; OECD 2003).

Funding is usually supplemented by parent fees. In general, parent fees make up a more sizeable contribution to program funding in long day care options than pre-schools.

In recent years, policy in the UK and Australia has favoured demand-side funding in which access to childcare is facilitated through subsidies to parents and supply is generated by market responses to subsidised demand. A major criticism of demand-side subsidy approaches is that these can lead to fluctuating enrolments which, in turn, lead to fluctuations in centre financing. The latter has flow on effects upon centre functioning particularly in relation to employment practices. Casualisation of the workforce and the implementation of uncertain and changeable work hours adversely impacts upon the quality of the programme offered to children, because a key contributor to quality is the creation of a stable and predictable staff so that children and their families can build strong, respectful and responsive relationships with key caregivers. In addition, reliance upon the private sector cannot guarantee the provision of services over the long term. For instance, recently in Australia a number of privately provided childcare centres in rural areas have been closed leaving many families with no childcare option (Horin, November 17, 2007 ). In the UK, reliance upon the private sector appears to be associated with social stratification (Penn, 2007). Thus, a heavy reliance upon demand-side funding does not appear to be successful in ensuring universal access to high quality ECEC.

A minimum public investment in early childhood services of 1% of GDP is the benchmark established by the European Commission Network on Childcare (European Commission Network on Childcare, 1996). Sweden is the only country, of the group reviewed, which reaches this level of investment. In recent years, the UK and New Zealand have increased their expenditure significantly; expenditure in Canada and Australia is notably lower. However, one drawback of using a percentage target is that it does not consider the total number of children the service system encompasses, nor the structural inputs to support the development of high quality. As a result, *Starting Strong II* suggests an alternative approach is to consider the average investment *per child* needed to create a good quality programme. These estimates vary according to the age of the child, the length of the programme (full-day or half day). But estimates generally range from \$US8,000 - \$US12,000 per child per year for a full-day programme with higher costs associated with younger age groups (OECD, 2006).

### **A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support**

To date, much policy attention has been paid to increasing children's access to pre-school education. Many governments are looking to establish universal access to pre-school education where this is not already available, or to increasing its availability in terms of the hours and length of time that children are entitled to attend. The UK's Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) study (Sylva et al., 2003) affirms the effectiveness of high quality pre-school education in improving outcomes for children considered at risk of school failure, but it makes the point that two years of

access to pre-school education is much more effective than a single year preceding school.

In Sweden, pre-school is available to all children between the ages of one and six (OECD 2001) and 68% of all children below the age of 6 are enrolled in pre-school (Rauch, 2007). New Zealand has recently introduced an entitlement to 20 hours per week of free early childhood education at teacher-led services for all three and four year olds (May, 2007). In the UK, three and four year olds are entitled to 12.5 hours a week for 33 weeks of the year and this is being extended (DfES 2003). In Australia, a number of jurisdictions offer universal access to pre-school education in the year before school, but there are serious gaps in provision in a number of regions (Press 2006). A pre-election promise of the newly elected national government was 15 hours a week of pre-school education for all four year old children (Rudd et al., 2007). In Canada less than 20% of children find a place in a regulated service in the years before school (OECD 2003 p.10).

However, attention to one or two years of pre-school before the commencement of compulsory schooling can divert attention from the needs of children below pre-school age. For working parents in particular, the use of unregulated, non family related, care options increases when the availability of formal care is limited (see for instance the experience of Canada, OECD 2003 p.66). Thus the UN interprets 'every child's right to education as beginning at birth and closely tied to the right to development'. In this way 'education' is not conceived of as 'schooling', rather it is envisaged as a community service for both children and parents (Woodhead and Moss, 2007).

The goal of universal access is not just a question of availability. It also raises questions of how to develop a system that does not result in groups of children being excluded or segregated. Hence, the first *Starting Strong* report stressed the need to give particular policy attention to children in need of special support, and the second reinforced this call with its recommendation to increase resources within universal programmes for children with diverse learning rights. This principle is upheld by the *UN General Comment No. 7* which advocates for all children to be guaranteed access to services with particular attention paid to those most vulnerable (2005). Disability, cultural and linguistic factors, poverty, and family dysfunction are among the factors that might cause families to be marginalised within, or disenfranchised from, ECEC. Yet appropriately resourced, high quality, responsive early childhood services are the very services that can directly provide, or be a platform for, the provision of the additional supports and interventions that facilitate children's successful social and educational inclusion. In relation to immigrant children, Pascal and Betram (2006) regard ECEC programs as 'key sites for enacting national goals for social inclusion and the creation of new citizens' (p.1).

Despite such well documented potential, *Starting Strong I* noted that in many countries the funding provided to support families and children with additional needs was often insufficient and irregular (2001). The capacity of early childhood systems to inclusively and effectively respond to families with additional needs is affected by the base from which they start. Sweden seeks to provide all children with access to mainstream services, with extra funding allocated to enable the provision of extra individualized attention to children who require specialist support (OECD 2006). The Sure Start programmes in the UK used the notion of 'progressive universalism' to

build up a system of supports to children and families that in the first instance target children in disadvantaged areas. Whilst Sure Start Programmes were established in specified areas, identified because of their levels of disadvantage, these programmes were open to all families in the area in which they were located. Additional support was made available for families with additional needs (OECD 2006).

By and large, policy approaches which facilitate the inclusion of children within mainstream programmes are considered the most successful. One exception to this has been the development of culturally specific programmes for Indigenous populations. Examples of these can be found in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Although New Zealand has separate language and cultural immersion programmes, it also works toward a bicultural mainstream ECEC sector (OECD, 2004).

### **A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance**

Whilst this literature review does not canvass the considerable body of evidence concerning the impact of quality on children's development, it notes that many ECEC policy debates, and actual and mooted interventions, are based on an understanding that the quality of early education and care does make a difference to how children and families fare (see Waldfogel 2006). The quality of ECEC is a critical issue because it can serve to either mitigate or exacerbate the impact of disadvantage. Whilst good quality early childhood programs have positive benefits for children and families in terms of both concurrent outcomes and outcomes over time (NICHD 2002; Sylva et al. 2003) poor quality environments can lead to adverse outcomes and pose a risk to children's development (Love et al., 2002; NICHD 2002). Children at risk of not doing well at school are positively influenced by participation in good quality services but they are also particularly susceptible to the impact of poor quality (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2000).

Thus policies and regulatory instruments to underpin the quality of service provision are recommended by both OECD reports (2001, 2006). The recommendations reflect diverse approaches to ensuring quality with the first emphasising the engagement of families and communities in determining and ensuring good quality services, and the second reinforcing the need for strong and enforceable governance, by calling for the creation of ***governance structures necessary for system accountability and quality assurance*** (OECD 2006). The different foci of each recommendation reflects the understanding that quality is multidimensional and involves the creation and enhancement of family and community networks; the provision of information, support and where appropriate, specialist intervention; in addition to caring and nurturing environments and learning programs (OECD 2001).

Across countries, the policies in place to support quality vary in the extent to which they rely upon externally imposed accountability mechanisms, and the content of such mechanisms. A mixed economy of service provision tends to generate a higher degree of reliance upon external monitoring and regulation (*UN General Comment, 2005*). Such an approach is consistent with a number of studies that indicate the quality of ECEC provided by the private sector is in general lower than that of non-profit services (Phillipsen et al., 1997; Mitchell, 2002; Cleveland et al., 2007). Regulation appears to play a mediating factor in improving standards (Phillipsen et al., 1997).

At the same time, both the OECD and the *UN General Comment No. 7* caution against an over-reliance upon externally imposed, standardised criteria for quality and highlight the need for ECEC services to work with local communities, in order to create responsive and dynamic services. Whilst clear about the need for high quality programmes, the *UN General Comment* advocates the development of community-based ECEC programmes that embrace a rights based approach and that seek to work with and empower parents. In countries such as Sweden, a strong philosophical commitment to children's rights, coupled with the employment of highly qualified staff, leads to less reliance on externally imposed government standards to ensure quality. Hence, commentators such as Moss (2007b) point to the presence of a skilled, knowledgeable and reflective early childhood workforce as central to the creation and sustaining of ethical and respectful early childhood services.

It is important to note that within early childhood academic, policy and practitioner communities, the notion of 'quality' has been contested (see for instance, Dahlberg et al., 1999). This contestation is not to downplay a focus upon children's wellbeing, but rather to highlight that understandings of, and approaches to, good quality early childhood services are embedded within particular cultural and political contexts. Critics of the discourse of quality in early childhood policy further claim that the concept of 'quality' is problematic because 'you have closure when the norm is attained'. They prefer to use concepts such as 'meaning-making' and 'ethical practice' in early childhood which emphasise a skilled, knowledgeable and reflective workforce able to engage with children, families and communities (Moss 2007).

*To develop with the stakeholders broad guidelines and curricular standards across ECEC services*

The introduction and implementation of early childhood curriculum within prior to school services raises a number of policy issues and its focus is often contested. Key debates concerning early childhood curriculum, apart from those that focus upon content, include whether or not they should be compulsory, and to what early childhood services they should apply. Soler and Miller (2003) describe early childhood curricula as 'sites of struggle' as 'parents, teachers, researchers and politicians often have strong and conflicting views' about 'content and contexts for learning and development in early childhood' (p. 59).

Soler and Miller's description of the staged curriculum developed for England as 'concerned about *what education is for* rather than *what the experience of education might entail*' (2003, p.62, emphasis added) neatly encapsulates the tensions emerging from differing understandings of the nature and purpose of curriculum. These competing understandings might be crudely grouped as either 'instrumentalist' or 'socio-cultural' in nature. Instrumentalist constructions tend to be highly prescriptive, whilst socio-cultural views are regarded as more appreciative of children's agency and the experiences of children in the here and now.

In her work examining early childhood curricula across a number of European nations, Oberhuemer (2005) captures these different perceptions about curriculum in the following description:

It is now widely recognised in the early childhood research community, that children are social agents, participating in

constructing and influencing their own lives. This means for the adults close to them that listening to children is a serious business, essential for understanding the multiple facets of childhood and the individual lives of children, and a necessary basis for involving them in democratic dialogues and decision-making. These images are far removed from understandings of children as immature and dependent young persons, or as mere recipients or reproducers of knowledge and culture.

The OECD in its *Country Note* for the UK expressed its concern about the downward pressure placed by the school sector on early childhood services, particularly in relation to goals for early learning. The UK curriculum for 3-5 year olds is linked to over 60 learning goals and has been described as ‘highly prescriptive’ (Moss 2007 p.9). The OECD commented that early childhood settings felt under pressure to ‘resemble downward extensions of primary school’ even though this approach is not considered supportive of young children’s learning (2000 p. 39). The OECD (2006) favours the development of curriculum frameworks that enable responsiveness to local conditions, that are respectful of the professional judgement of teachers, and that have the capacity to incorporate new ideas, perspectives and understandings. In this respect it is important to note the emergence of a new phenomenon, the curriculum developed and promulgated from the central office of a business or corporation. For instance, ABC Learning, one of the world’s largest childcare providers boasts its own curriculum (ABC Developmental Learning Centres, 2007).

Alternative constructions of curriculum are less concerned with academic outcomes and more attentive to ensuring a respectful environment for children that works with their natural dispositions for learning. For instance, the *NSW Curriculum Framework* centres upon a recognition of the primacy of children’s relationships to their learning and wellbeing; New Zealand’s early childhood curriculum, *Te Whariki*, ‘conceptualises the child’s development as a series of increasingly intricate patterns of linked experience and meaning, centred on cultural and individual purpose.’ (Carr & May, 1996, cited in Soler & Miller, 2003, p.63); and the Swedish Curriculum declares that ‘all pre-school activity should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values’ (Samuelsson, 2002).

The types of ECEC services to which early childhood curriculum applies, vary considerably across, and within, nations. Typically, curriculum is more likely to apply to pre-school, than to long day care (centre based or home-based). However, a shared curriculum may act as a unifying influence when it applies across a diverse sector. A number of New Zealand early childhood commentators believe that *Te Whariki*, which applies to all early childhood services in New Zealand, has resulted in a ‘shared philosophical and pedagogical stance’ (White, 2005). Further, Meade and Podmore (2003-2003) argue that the impact of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum in unifying care and education has also been a force in successfully preventing a ‘schoolification’ of the sector. *Te Whariki* became mandatory for chartered early childhood programs in 1998 and is one of a handful of curricula that give official recognition to infants and toddlers (Meade and Podmore, 2002-2003).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Others include the NSW Curriculum Framework, South Australia, Sweden

### **Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision**

States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision. (Article 3.3, UNCROC).

The quality of the care and education available to children in formal ECEC is intrinsically linked to staff. Qualifications of staff, consistency of staff and staffing arrangements, and the relationships that staff are able to build with children, families and communities are central features of a good quality system. Yet the OECD observes that ‘the professional standing of the early childhood workforce tends to remain low’ (2006, p.158). Thus Starting Strong II reinforces the recommendation of the first report by recommending that policy aims to improve the working conditions and professional education of ECEC staff.

Specialist training in early childhood learning and development, and early childhood teacher training, have a significant and positive impact on quality, giving staff the skills and knowledge base they need to work with children and families positively and effectively and upon which they can draw to engage in ongoing reflection (Whitebrook et al., 1989; Clarke-Stewart et al., 2002). Specialised teacher training produces better outcomes for children and less qualified staff are significantly better at supporting children’s learning when they work with an early childhood teacher (EPPE, 2001). The UN General Comment (2005) reinforces the requirement for appropriately staffed services for young children emphasising that all staff working with young children should be appropriately trained, grounded in a sound understanding, both theoretical and practical, of children's rights and development. Further, it urges the availability of specialist professional resources and support. Variations in the staffing arrangements expected for each type of early childhood setting, and indeed, differences between the early childhood sector and schools, are found in most of the countries canvassed for this review, and emanate from previous or existing divisions between education and care. These variations often enable lesser qualified (or unqualified) staff to work in childcare and tend to work against the development of an integrated ECEC sector and the creation of a ‘strong and equal partnership’ with education.

Important policy considerations regarding staff include:

- Whether teachers or early childhood specialists are employed in early childhood programmes;
- Whether early childhood teacher specialisations are valued and required;
- Whether teachers in early childhood programmes have pay parity with their counterparts in the school sector.

When a teacher qualification (or its equivalent) is not required within an early childhood setting, but is within a school, then it is difficult to claim or create an equal partnership. In Australia, the UK and Canada, teacher qualifications are required for pre-school programs, but not necessarily for long day care programs. New Zealand is

implementing a major strategy to improve staff qualifications by setting targets for the employment of registered teachers in early childhood services, resulting in a minimum of 70% regulated staff having an approved teaching qualification by 2012, with the remainder of staff studying for an approved teaching qualification (Mitchell and Brooking, 2007). The achievement of this goal has been supported by a range of training incentives including scholarships (Mitchell 2004). In addition, wage parity has been achieved between teachers in kindergartens and teachers in schools (Mitchell et al. 2007). The UK is looking to reform its early years' workforce by improving qualifications across the early childhood sector (OECD 2006).

Another important consideration is whether the early childhood pedagogical component of teacher qualifications is valued. In Sweden, pre-schools are staffed by teachers with an early childhood specialisation (OECD, 2006). Canadian kindergarten teachers are not required to have special training in early childhood (OECD 2003 p.29), and Australian pre-schools do not necessarily require the employment of an early childhood teacher (Press 2006). Cheeseman (2007) argues that, in at least some Australian jurisdictions, early childhood policies centred on welfare and the delivery of early childhood programmes by welfare agencies, have served to further marginalise the role of early childhood teaching qualifications.

Attracting and retaining staff in early childhood programmes have been cited as difficulties in Australia (Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, 2006), New Zealand (Mitchell et al. 2007), Canada (Expert Panel, 2007) and the UK (Pugh, 2003). Many reports cite low wages, and poor conditions, as major contributors to this problem (Expert Panel, 2007; OECD 2006). In NZ, one fifth of teachers considered their workload to be excessive, with issues such as excessive workload, and poorer working conditions more likely to arise in private centres. Nevertheless there are also grounds for optimism, with 73% of early childhood educators and teachers in New Zealand rating their morale as generally high, a higher rating than teachers in primary and secondary education settings (Mitchell et al. 2007).

### **Systemic attention to monitoring and data collection; & a stable framework and long term agenda for research and evaluation**

The need to better inform the development and evaluation of programmes relevant to infants and young children has resulted in greater attention to the collection and collation of data on early childhood programmes. The UN points to the need for comprehensive and contemporary data 'on all aspects of early childhood for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved, and for the assessment of the impact of policies' (2005 np).

Countries have sought to establish or enhance data sets in a number of ways including:

- the funding of longitudinal research tracing the development of large cohorts of children over time;
- the gathering and evaluation of data at the population level; and
- improving existing data collection regimes, specific to early childhood programme areas, by addressing issues such as data compatibility.

A number of countries have instituted longitudinal studies designed to assess children's health and development and the determinants of these. New Zealand's *Competent Children, Competent Learners* project, funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, commenced in 1993 with the original aim of examining the concurrent, short-term, and long-term impact of early childhood education experiences. The project has recently completed its seventh phase and has tracked the development of the children at ages 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16. The study 'analyses the impact of different experiences and resources on a range of competencies, and what can help narrow the gaps between children' Education, (Ministry of Education (nd), 2007). Canada's *National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth* (NLSCY) began in 1994 and is tracking the development and wellbeing of Canadian children from birth to early adulthood with the aim of gathering information on the factors influencing social, emotional and behavioural development and their impact on the child's development over time (Statistics Canada, 2006). The UK's [\*Millennium Cohort Survey\*](#) commenced in 2001 and is following a sample of nearly 19,000 babies born between September and August 2001 (Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS), 2007 ). Australia's *Longitudinal Study of Australia's Children* (LSAC), which commenced in 2003, is gathering data on 10,000 children over at least a seven year period. The study commenced with one cohort of 5000 infants, and a second cohort of 5000 children aged 4 or 5 years. (Australian Institute of Family Studies, nd; Sanson et al. 2002 ). Data will be collected from the children and their families from 2003-4 until 2010 and possibly beyond. It is envisaged that the outcomes from each of these studies will inform the development of policy related to children and their families.

Population level measures of young children's development are also gaining currency as a means of providing information to assess, at the community level, how well children are faring. An example of this is the Early Development Index (EDI) developed by Janus and Offord in Canada. Based upon a teacher-completed checklist that covers five developmental domains (language and cognitive skills; emotional maturity; physical health and well-being; social competence; communication skills and general knowledge) results are interpreted at suburb or postcode level. Such mapping of children's development assists in identifying socio-economic and community influences on children's development and in monitoring changes over time (Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne (RCH), 2007). Since being piloted in 1998, the EDI has been completed in a large number of communities throughout Canada. British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba now mandate the inclusion of all kindergarten children in regular EDI measurement (Janus et al., 2007). Since 2004, an adapted version of the EDI, the *Australian Early Development Index* (AEDI), has been completed in 60 communities around Australia (RCH, 2007).

Some governments have funded research designed to gather data specific to ECEC, often with the aim of determining its impact on children's outcomes, and to discern which factors contribute to programmes which appear to provide the most effective support to children's development. Such studies include New Zealand's aforementioned *Competent Children, Competent Learners Project* and the UK's *EPPE Project* which commenced in 1997 and is still continuing.

As well as the examples discussed, the regular gathering of data on trends in usage, funding, and characteristics such as staffing, ownership and so forth, of early

childhood services, enables the cumulative impact of policies to be assessed. In order to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its strategic plan for Early Childhood Education, *Pathways to the Future: Nga Huarahi Arataki*, NZ established a baseline picture of the situation of NZ services 'at the beginning of a period of considerable change' (Mitchell et al. 2007 p.xi) through its *First NZCER national survey of early childhood education services 2003-2004*. However, diversity in program type and delivery, splits and differences in responsibility between portfolios as well as jurisdictions, has meant that in a number of countries, there are serious gaps and problems in much of the data that has been collected concerning early childhood programs. Frequently, data are not compatible and thus not comparable, at both jurisdictional and national levels. Data on children under age 3 in early childhood programmes is particularly difficult to access (OECD 2006, p.176). This has been a particular problem for Australia. In December 2007, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released a discussion paper entitled: *Measuring Learning in Australia: Concepts and directions in Early Childhood Learning* (Pink, 2007). Whilst the paper proposes to gather information on all education and care programmes for children from birth to eight years, it defines formal learning programs as only applying to children over 3 thus potentially exacerbating the problem identified by the OECD.

### **Trends, debates and tensions in early childhood policy**

'The institutions we provide for children both 'shape' children and shape our understandings of them' (Petrie 2005, p. 175). In turn, the nature of the institutions we provide for children is influenced by a range of social and economic considerations and related policies, not all of which are driven by a primary focus upon the interests and needs of the children themselves. It is clear that early childhood provision is in flux in many countries. This section provides a brief overview of some of the myriad influences competing, or coalescing, to shape the early childhood landscape.

In the countries reviewed, the two most common institutions for the care and education of young children outside the home, pre-school and childcare, have grown from differing historical roots. Pre-school, with its foundations in the European kindergarten movement of the nineteenth century; and childcare, strongly related to both nineteenth century philanthropy and the women's movement of the second half of the twentieth century, may still reflect distinct forms and purposes. It is only in relatively recent years that a number of countries have made progress toward breaking down dichotomies between children's education (pre-school) and care (childcare). Nevertheless, the nexus between the provision of ECEC and the capacity of mothers to enter the workforce remains an important policy consideration.

At the same time, the emergence of a significant research base examining the impact of ECEC upon children themselves has become an important contributor to early childhood policy debates. As more is understood about the impact of children's time in ECEC on their development and wellbeing, more attention is being paid to the question of the quality of all early childhood care and learning environments, and the nature of children's experiences within them. The accumulation of longitudinal studies on children's outcomes across a number of developmental domains, coupled with cost-benefit analyses that quantify the 'pay-off' for money spent on high quality

childcare, has renewed policy interest in ECEC. The framing of ECEC expenditure as an investment is now common in the policy discourse.

Thus a number of common trends and debates have emerged in early childhood policy at the conceptual and programme level although resultant developments have not been uniform. In part, variations in approach to improving early childhood systems can be explained by each country's differing foundation, particularly with regard to availability and access to early childhood services. More fundamentally, differences also arise from each country's image of the child, and its understanding of the role and purpose of education, and in particular, the care and education of young children. As Moss (2007 p.7) points out, inherent in ECEC policy debates and directions is the question of 'what we think early childhood services are for?'

In countries such as Australia and the UK, the investment discourse associated with ECEC funding has a tendency to construct children primarily as 'adults in the making' and the provision of ECEC services is linked to an overriding purpose of school readiness, rather than the creation of spaces for children themselves. The extent to which children are regarded and respected as a distinct social group appears associated with a concern for the experiences of children themselves, and a consciousness of children's rights. Thus Kagan and Hallmark (2001) observe that 'Sweden operationalises its national values by providing a splendid array of high-quality services undergirded by a clear and widely held vision of childhood' (p.6). Arguably, NZ's close attention to children's rights in its strategic plan for an improved and expanded ECEC sector, signals a similar regard for children. Not surprisingly both Sweden and New Zealand are highly regarded for their early childhood sectors.

Finally, the impact of neo-liberal economics has opened up early childhood services to the private for-profit and global corporate sector in a way which is profoundly changing the early childhood policy and provision (Duncan, 2007; Penn, 2007; Woodrow and Press, 2007). As Duncan (2007) notes neoliberal discourses position 'education as a private good that should be paid for by the individual' and assert that 'choice and competition... ensure efficiency and the maximum use of resources' (p.321). Yet, the arguments for comprehensive ECEC systems rest in an understanding of early childhood education as a public good. For instance, the final recommendation of *Starting Strong II* asks governments *to aspire to ECEC systems that support broad learning, participation and democracy* (OECD 2006). In Australia, for-profit (and increasingly corporate) provision dominates the provision of long day care. The extent to which governments can achieve social and educational objectives via market based childcare is a question that is yet to be answered.

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## 2 Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Audits

### 2.1 Terminology

Throughout these audits, we use the term early childhood education and care (ECEC), as defined by the OECD (2006: 229),

as a global term encompassing all arrangements providing care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or programme content.

This is a more narrow understanding of ECEC than the full OECD definition. While we acknowledge that services for school-aged children and family-friendly policies form part of ECEC, we do not provide a detailed examination of these services in the audits. Rather, we focus on formal services for children in the years before they start school.

ECEC refers to a wide range of program types and settings. Different countries, and different jurisdictions within those countries, have particular sets of children's services. Each country audit uses the terminology of that country and explains what is meant by those terms. The following list sets out the key forms and names for the ECEC services offered in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK as well as setting out OECD terminology as it was used in the two *Starting Strong* reports.

Australian ECEC services are commonly known broadly classed as pre-school or child care. Pre-schools are programs offered in the year or two before school to help prepare children for their school experience. In Australia, pre-school is also known as kindergarten, child parent centres or reception. The two key forms of child care in Australia are long day care and family day care; the former taking place in centres and the latter in family homes. Child care is usually offered full time, although nearly all children attend for less than 20 hours per week. Increasingly, many child care services provide pre-school programs, blurring the distinction between these service types.

In Canada, as in Australia, ECEC services tend to be classified into two groups. Kindergarten generally refers education services offered part-time to children in the year or two before they start school. Child care services include nurseries, pre-schools, full-day child care and family child care.

Most ECEC in New Zealand is provided through education and care centres. These offer places to children from birth until they start school for a full or part day. In New Zealand, kindergarten refers to services run by committees of parents and community members that offer half day places for children aged between 2 ½ and 5 years. New Zealand also offers ECEC services in which Maori is the only language spoken, *Kohanga Reo*. These programs are managed by parents who also participate in the day to day program.

In Sweden, ECEC services are divided into pre-school and the pre-school class. Pre-school, *förskola*, is offered full-time to children aged between 1 and 6 years. These children may also attend open pre-school, *öppen förskola*, which is attended part-time according to need. Some children of this age group also attend family day care,

*familjedaghem*. The pre-school class, *förskoleklass*, is designed to help children in the transition to school. It is offered to children aged 6 to 7 years.

The United Kingdom has traditionally, like other English speaking countries, clustered educational and care services into two different groups, has now reduced this distinction. Children's services include day nurseries which often offer full-day care for children, childminders who provide care in family homes, Children's Centres which offer integrated ECEC services and pre-school or early years education, offered to children in the year or two prior to attending school.

The OECD (2006: 227-8) identified eight forms of ECEC services as follows:

*Family day care (FDC): Family day care exists when a child (or children) is (are) looked after in the private home of a carer on a sessional, half-day (less than 20 hours per week) or full-day basis. The carer may be self- or municipally employed. Family day care is regulated and licensed, according to the country, to varying degrees (see licensing regimes below). The term also may include a licensed child minder, who looks after a child in the child's own home. In many countries, child-minding in the child's home is considered a private agreement and is not subject to any regulation.*

*Centre-based ECEC: Centre-based ECEC is collective (more than 5 children) early education and care for young children from 6-12 months to 6 years, distinguished from services provided in households or family settings. The centres may be public or private, and normally cater to toddlers and/or older children until entry into kindergarten or perhaps up to school age. Many countries still operate a split between services for children 0-3 years and those for children 3-6 years, but current trends favour age-integrated centres. Programmes are typically full-day or part-day (less than 20 hours per week), and are in all cases conducted by a minimum number of qualified professionals. Centres open either for the academic year only (with scheduled school holidays), or for the longer work year, that is for about 11 months. In our definition of centre-based ECEC, we include crèches, kindergartens, pre-school (normally 3-6 years) and publicly provided pre-primary classes, but not playgroups, or out-of-school care.*

*Crèche: A crèche is a professional centre-based service primarily for infants and toddlers.*

*Kindergarten or pre-school programmes are professional centre-based ECEC programmes, primarily for children from 3-6 years, with a predominantly educational aim. Kindergartens attempt to nurture holistic development, learning dispositions and in some countries specific competences in pre-defined learning areas. Kindergartens may also have a "readiness for school" objective and may focus on pre-literacy and numeracy activities. Kindergarten and pre-school programmes are distinguished from playgroups in being daily, more focussed on education, and with more highly qualified staff.*

*Out-of-school provision, after-school care or free-time services for children.\* "Free-time" is a professionally organised care service for children aged 3-12 years before and/or after early education/primary school hours. The service can take place either on the school premises or outside.*

*Playgroup: A playgroup is a service offering toddlers (and perhaps, older children) the opportunity – generally on a sessional basis, once or twice a week – to play with each other, supervised by a qualified playgroup supervisor or parent. Large differences exist between countries with regard to regulation, programme, staff qualifications, pedagogical supervision, etc., in this type of programme.*

*Public pre-primary education (and kindergarten in Australia and the United States) is defined as the initial stage of organised instruction, designed primarily to introduce young children to a school-type environment. This professional service is generally free, funded directly by the Ministry of Education or local school district. Classes are conducted by fully trained teachers, but can be characterised – particularly in European countries – by unfavourable child-staff ratios and a pedagogy oriented to the acquisition of pre-defined competences in cognitive fields.*

*Comprehensive services: A comprehensive services approach to early childhood education and care goes beyond curriculum and activities for children and focuses also on the home and community environments. Typically, a comprehensive services centre works in co-operation with other community services and pays particular attention to parents. The centre will provide when necessary courses and advice on parenting (in particular, how to support child development), employment and job training, and leisure activities.*

**2.2 Australia***Megan Blaxland, Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW*

Population (2007) <sup>a</sup>	21 million		
Population of children under 5 years (2006) <sup>a</sup>	1.3m		
Compulsory school age <sup>b</sup>	6 years, but the majority of children start school at age 5.		
Measures of demand (2005) <sup>c</sup>	In a period of four weeks, 8.5% of 0-4 year olds required additional formal care (not including pre-school)		
Use of ECEC services (2002) <sup>d</sup>	Less 1 yrs: 7% 1 yrs: 27 % 2 yrs: 41% 3 yrs: 63% 4 yrs: 83% 5 yrs: 28%		
GDP per capita (2006) <sup>e</sup>	US\$33,300		
Child poverty rate <sup>f</sup>	14.7		
Employment	Labour force participation rate	Unemployed	Part-time employment as % of employment
Male (2006) <sup>g</sup>	72.3 %	3.9 %	16.0
Female (2006) <sup>g</sup>	57.7 %	4.8 %	40.7
Mothers of pre-school aged children (2005) <sup>h</sup>	0-5 years old 48.3%		
Family policy			
Maternity leave <sup>b,i</sup>	Unpaid parental leave for 52 weeks can be claimed by employed mothers as maternity leave, or shared with fathers. Some paid maternity esp. in public sector and large private firms, 32 per cent of maternity leave is paid. A one-off payment, Baby Bonus, of \$4133 (\$5000 from July 1 2008) on the birth of a child.		
Paternity leave <sup>b</sup>	Unpaid parental leave for 52 weeks can be claimed by employed fathers as paternity leave or shared with mothers. 19 per cent of paternity leave is paid. Men can also take for unpaid paternity leave of 52 weeks (to be shared with their partners but not at the same time with the exception of one week after the birth of the child). 6 per cent of men take unpaid paternity leave.		
Parental leave <sup>j</sup>	52 weeks unpaid parental leave available to employees of at least one year. All permanent employees entitled to 10 days paid personal leave = can be used as carer's leave.		

Family allowances <sup>k</sup>	Means-tested payments Family Tax Benefits Parts A (ranges from approx \$1200 to \$6000 per child annually) and B (up to \$3300 per child annually) assist with the cost of raising children.
Income support for parents <sup>l</sup>	Low income lone and couple parents are entitled to income support with no employment/activity requirement until their youngest child reaches school age. After that there are part-time activity requirements until the youngest child reaches 16 years.

Sources: (a) ABS, 2007: 3,23; (b) OECD, 2006: 265; (c) ABS, 2006: 30; (d) ABS, 2003: 14 (my calculations); (e) CIA, 2007; (f) UNICEF, 2005: 4; (g) OECD, 2007a: 247-8; (h) OECD, 2007b: Table 3.2; (i) Family Assistance Office, 2007c (j) Workplace Ombudsman, 2007; (k) Family Assistance Office, 2007d and 2007e; (l) Centrelink, 2007: 17-20.

### Summary description of Australian ECEC policy development

Early childhood education and care services in Australia have traditionally been viewed in terms of policy responsibility as either ‘education’ or ‘care’. This reflects historical divisions between care services and educational services and the constitutional allocation of responsibilities between state/territory and federal jurisdictions. However, in practice there is considerable overlap, most notably with many ‘care’ services offering educational programs which are mandated in some jurisdictions (Press, 2006:61). Pre-schools, kindergartens or reception are targeted to children in the one or two years before school (hereafter all these services are referred to as pre-school). Other children’s services include long day care based in centres, and family day care which is based in family homes (both hereafter referred to as child care). Most children who attend ECEC services attend formal child care services rather than pre-school.

1996 saw the election to Australian Government of the conservative Liberal/National Coalition. The new Government’s first act with regards to ECEC was to change funding arrangements so that child care services were no longer directly funded (Harris, 2007: 45). Operational subsidies for community long day care services were significantly reduced and eligibility for fee assistance through Child Care Assistance and the Child Care Rebate tightened. In combination with the Family Tax Initiative, these measures redirected public funding towards providing, as the Government described it, the “choice” to couple families to have one parent providing full-time at-home care for young children (Cass and Brennan, 2003:52-3).

In 2000, the Australian Government introduced a “new tax system”, a goods and services tax, which incorporated substantial amendments to family support. At this time, the Child Care Benefit was introduced, replacing Child Care Assistance and the Child Care Rebate. The Child Care Benefit provided a higher level of support to more families because the upper income threshold was raised. It also increased the hours of care which could be claimed to 50 hours for parents who were employed, studying or seeking employment or 20 hours to other parents (since increased to 24 hours) (Brennan, 2007: 217). As the Child Care Benefit is means-test on family income, in couples where one parent works full-time (usually the father) and the other works part-time (usually the mother) it is often the fathers’ larger income which determines access to the benefit (McDonald, 2002: 201).

Child Care Benefit is payable for approved or registered care; with approved care fees subsidised at a higher rate than registered care (Family Assistance, 2007a). Approved care includes most long day care and family day care services. Grandparents, relatives, friends or nannies can register with the Family Assistance Office so that Child Care Benefit can be claimed for their registered care. Pre-school is not recognised as a form of approved care but is sometimes treated as registered care.

Following sustained lobbying about the affordability of child care, the Australian Government introduced the Child Care Tax Rebate in 2004 to supplement the Child Care Benefit. As a rebate, the additional form of fees assistance reduces the income tax liability by the equivalent of 30 per cent of parents' out-of-pocket child care expenses; that is 30 per cent of the net cost after receipt of Child Care Benefit. Eligibility for the Child Care Tax Rebate is limited to those who have an employment, study or job search commitment and who have claimed Child Care Benefit for approved care (Family Assistance Office, 2007b).

The Child Care Advisory Council was established by the Federal Government to investigate the likely child care needs of Australia after 2001 and to identify action which might need to be taken to ensure appropriate child care would be available. The Council's 2001 report, *Child Care: Beyond 2001*, advocated "reconceptualising" child care to incorporate both care and education (CCAC, 2001). The Council recommended the creation of a national children's agenda that would improve recognition of the importance of children's early years, help retain and attract ECEC workers with skills, better ensure equity of access to children's services and enhance collaboration between levels of government and a range of children's services.

In April 2003, a Child Care Workforce Think Tank was convened by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs as part of its response to *Child Care: Beyond 2001*. Improved pay and conditions and level of skills in the ECEC workforce were central to the recommendations put forward by the Think Tank (CCWTT, 2003: 6-7). The Government response agreed that the ECEC workforce should be "appropriately remunerated", but repeatedly stated that "it is not for governments to determine...what the remuneration should be" (CCWTT, 2003: 75-76).

Also in 2003, the Australian Government released a consultation paper "Towards a National Agenda for Early Childhood". Following consultation, a draft agenda was released in 2004 and the final agenda in May 2007. The Agenda establishes four areas for action: healthy families with young children; early learning and care; supporting families and parenting; and creating child-friendly communities (Australian Government, 2007: 19-26). In the area of early learning and care, the Agenda seeks to promote early learning for children which is conducted by parents, improve the consistency of ECEC systems across Australia, improve access to ECEC among the most disadvantaged children and create a skilled ECEC workforce (Australian Government, 2007: 21).

In the Federal election of November 2007, a new Labor Government was elected. The new ministry included a dedicated Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Childcare located within the Prime Minister's portfolio (Commonwealth Government, 2007). Prior to the election, Australian Labor Party (2007: 4) announcements placed a new emphasis on education in children's services policy at a federal level; the party declared that "Federal Labor will put learning and

development at the centre of Australia's approach to early childhood education and care." Labor additionally committed to developing universal pre-school for all four year old children for 15 hours per week; the creation of new long day care centres on the grounds of educational institutions (schools, universities and technical colleges), establishing new standards for ECEC quality and increasing the number of qualified early childhood educators. The party plan to improve ECEC affordability involved raising the Child Care Tax Rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent of out of pocket costs.

### **ECEC provision and administration**

#### *Auspices*

All three levels of government in Australia, federal, state/territory and local, are involved in ECEC. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Australian Federal and State governments developed parallel systems for ECEC (McDonald, 2002: 197). State ECEC systems tend towards being universal, providing equal access to pre-school education for all children as well as overseeing child care licensing; whereas Federal systems have been more concerned with the delivery of care to the children of working parents who receive income-tested payments and rebates (McDonald, 2002:198).

Currently, at the Federal level, ECEC is shared by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) (OECD, 2006: 266). A key FaHCSIA responsibility is the administration of the Child Care Benefit, but the Department also funds child care in areas of need and appoints National Childcare Accreditation Council which oversees quality assurance (FaHCSIA, 2007: 1.2; Press, 2006: 26). Pre-schools are the responsibility of DEST which is also responsible for primary, secondary and tertiary education at a national level. DEST pre-school policy has tended to focus on Indigenous children, rather than pre-schools as a whole (McDonald, 2002: 199). Supplementary Recurrent Assistance, for example, aims to encourage improvements in Indigenous education outcomes with a focus on students in rural and remote areas. It provides per capita funding for education providers includes pre-schools, but also schools and settings providing vocational training.

A similar division between care and education has traditionally been repeated at the state and territory level. In most states, ECEC policy responsibility is shared between a number of departments, including health, community services and education (Press, 2006: 26). However, in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, ECEC service policy is located solely within departments of education (DEECD, 2008; Press, 2006: 58). Most state and territory governments are responsible for funding and/or administering pre-schools, licensing of centre-based long day care and other child care services, and implementing and monitoring national child care standards.

#### *Key providers*

In the early 1990s, half of the government supported long day care places were with community-based child care centres and half were with private-for-profit centres (AIHW, 2005a: 416). By 1996, for-profit businesses were responsible for nearly three-quarters of all government supported long day care places. In the preceding

years, the number of community places remained fairly steady, but the number of for-profit places trebled. These proportions continued in the following decade, so that in 2004, private-for-profit long day care places made up 72 per cent of the 229,603 government supported places. Family day care supported an additional 74,508 children. In 2002-03, approximately 260,000 children attended pre-schools which were funded or provided by state or territory governments (SCRGSP, 2005: 14.9).

Table 2.1 shows that the private sector plays a much more limited role in the provision of pre-school services than it does child care. Moreover, the distribution in ECEC service provision between community, business and government varies widely from state to state.

**Table 2.1: Proportion of State and Territory licensed and/or registered children's services by management type, 2003-04 (per cent) <sup>a</sup>**

	NSW	Vic <sup>b</sup>	Qld	WA	SA	Tas <sup>c</sup>	ACT	NT <sup>d</sup>
Child care								
Community managed <sup>e</sup>	33.1	39.2	26.0	25.1	40.3	58.8	84.2	77.4
Private <sup>f</sup>	63.5	45.9	70.5	70.9	33.7	18.4	15.8	22.6
Government managed	3.4	14.9	3.5	4.0	26.0	22.8	–	na
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Preschool								
Community managed <sup>e</sup>	90.0	74.5	22.9	na	4.7	..	8.0	4.3
Private <sup>f</sup>	10.0	8.4	21.8	na	–	22.7	–	na
Government managed	na	17.2	55.3	100.0	95.3	77.3	92.0	95.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: SCRGSP, 2005: 14.12. Notes: (a) Includes all Australian, State and Territory government supported services. Most services receive both Australian Government and State/Territory funding. (b) All government managed pre-schools in Victoria are managed by local government. (c) Pre-schools include funded non-government pre-schools. (d) Pre-school services are provided by the Department of Education directly, but a range of management functions are devolved to school councils and parent management committees. (e) Community managed services include not-for-profit services provided or managed by parents, churches or co-operatives. (f) Private for-profit services provided or managed by a company, private individual or non-government school. na Not available. .. Not applicable. – Nil or rounded to zero.

ABC Learning is the largest for-profit provider of child care in Australia and has also become a significant player internationally. Since its listing on the stock market in 2001, ABC Learning has bought out most of its corporate rivals as well as many small community and individual owner-operator services (Brennan, 2007: 217). In 2006, it operated 905 long day care centres in Australia and anticipated that in 2007 it would operate about 20 per cent of Australian long day care centres (ABC Learning, 2006: 5, 8).

### *Funding mechanisms*

The 2002-03 Australian National Accounts report that expenditure on both child care and pre-school education by public and private sources was 0.45 per cent of GDP (OECD, 2006: 270). Sixty-six per cent of the spending was public and 34 per cent private. The OECD (2007c: 206) publication, *Education at a Glance*, reported that in 2004 Australian public and private spending on pre-primary education was 0.1 per cent of GDP (this is spending on children aged from 3 years until school age). This

was the lowest pre-primary educational expenditure in the OECD (a rank Australia shared with Korea); it compared with an OECD average of 0.5 per cent.

The Australian Productivity Commission reported that total government expenditure on services for children aged 0-12 years, which included both child care and pre-school was \$2.4 billion in 2003-04 (SCRGSP, 2005: 14.6). Of this, the Federal Government's contribution was largely directed towards fee assistance for parents (Press, 2006; SCRGSP, 2005). The state and territory government component was mostly used for pre-school education.

It is estimated that families contribute 54 per cent, or \$2 billion, annually to the cost of long day care, family day care and outside school hours care, \$1.8 billion is for children aged 0-4 attending long day care or family day care (ACOSS, 2006: 9).

The Child Care Benefit is the primary funding mechanism implemented by the federal government. The benefit pays a maximum rate of \$3.37 and a minimum of \$0.56 per hour for one child in care<sup>4</sup> (Family Assistance Office, 2007a). Families using registered, not approved care, such as that provided by grandparents, nannies or some pre-schools, are only entitled to the minimum rate. The federal government also funds the Child Care Tax Rebate, which offers a 30 per cent tax rebate on out of pocket child care expenses. Under the new Labor Government, the rebate proportion will increase to 50.

#### *Affordability*

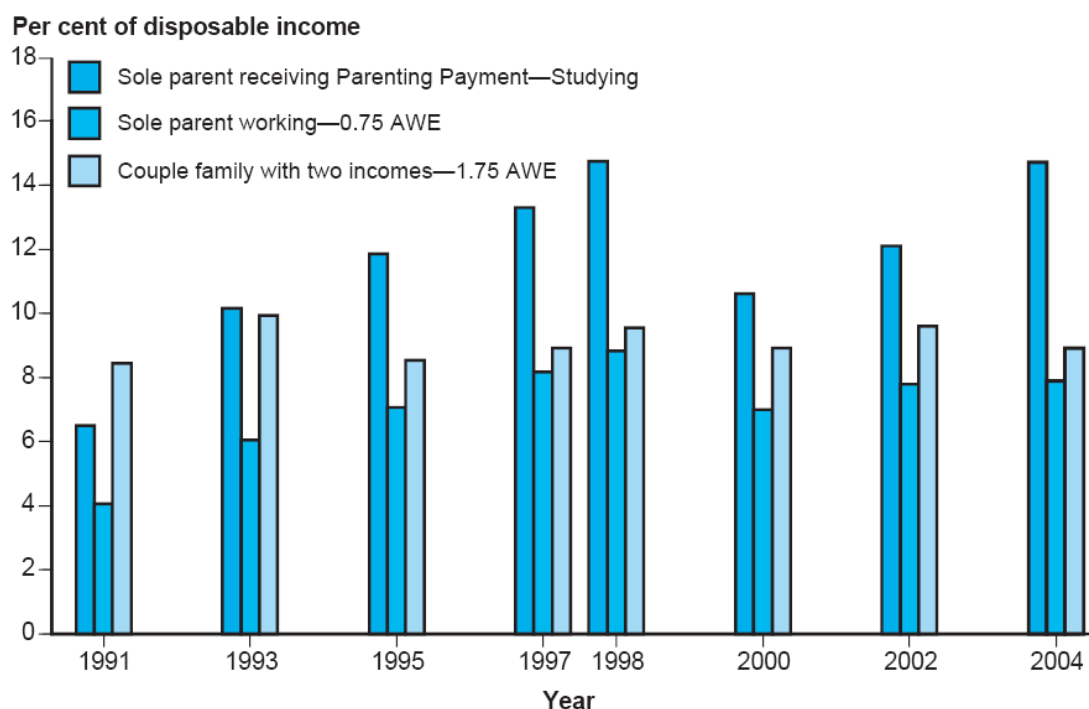
The affordability of pre-school varies widely across Australia (Walker, 2004). In most states pre-schools charge no fees, but seek voluntary contributions from parents. In Queensland, school based pre-schools do not charge fees, but other pre-schools do. In NSW and Victoria the cost of fees fluctuates widely and can be high. In general the cost of attending pre-school cannot be reduced by claiming the Child Care Benefit or Child Care Rebate.

When the Child Care Benefit was introduced in 2000, the cost of care for families fell (AIHW, 2005a: 95). This can be seen in Figure 2.1 which shows the percentage of disposable income spent on child care lower in 2000 compared to 1998, most particularly for a lone parent who was studying. However, since 2000, the cost of child care has risen faster than the inflation rate to which the Child Care Benefit is indexed (ABS, 2006: 14). As a result, the cost of care as a proportion of disposable income has risen so that by 2004 costs approached pre-2000 levels. High earning dual income families were the exception.

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4 Child Care Benefit rates at 2 July 2007.

**Figure 2.1: Cost of childcare as a proportion of disposable income, for one child using private long day care for 40 hours per week, 1991-2004**



Source: AIHW, 2005a: 97. Notes: AWE is a measure of the national average weekly earnings of Australians. 1.75 AWE represents a couple families with one member working full-time and the other part-time.

The Child Care Benefit is a progressive assistance program which redistributes the costs of care so that families spend similar proportions of their incomes on child care after receipt of the benefit (ACOSS, 2006: 9). The Child Care Benefit has been criticised for reasons of gender equity. As the Child Care Benefit is means-tested on family income, in couples where one parent works part-time (usually the mother) and the other works full-time (usually the father), it tends to be the fathers' larger income which determines access to the benefit (McDonald, 2002).

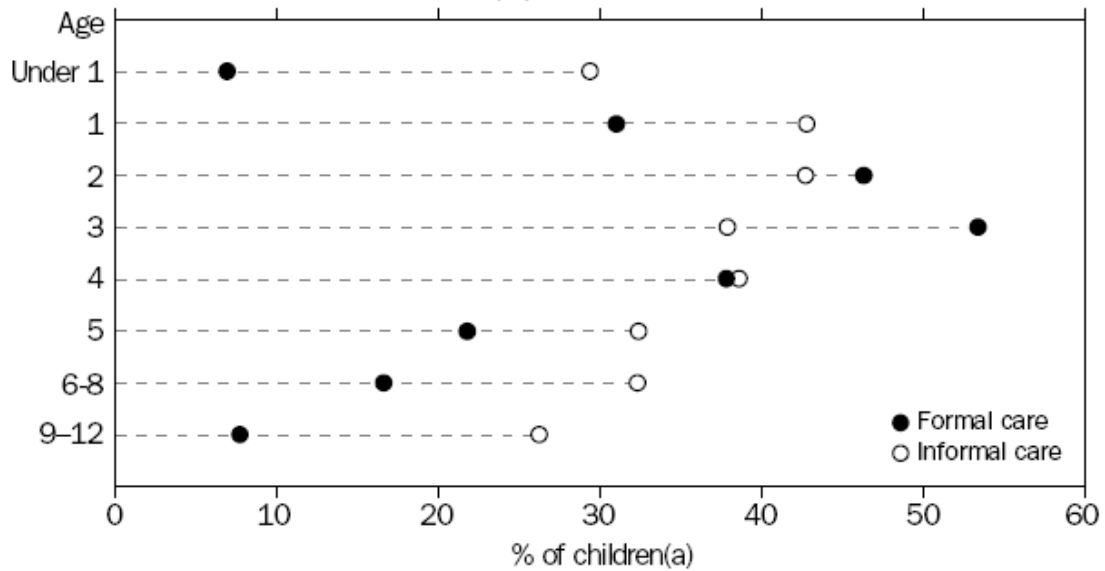
In contrast to the Child Care Benefit, Child Care Tax Rebate is a regressive payment. It is designed to reduce the costs of care for those with high child care bills and the highest benefits will go to those with the highest costs; disproportionately those with the highest incomes (Brennan, 2007: 222). Families with very low incomes who pay little or no income tax will benefit least from the Child Care Tax Rebate as an offset to their tax obligations. The Australian Labor Party election promise to increase the Child Care Tax Rebate from 30 to 50 per cent will not change the regressive nature of this policy.

#### *Access to ECEC services*

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated that in June 2005 496,500 children aged less than 6 years used formal care services; thirty-three per cent of the 1.5 million children who were of pre-school age (ABS, 2006: 14). Use of formal care peaked at three years old, when 53 per cent of children attended formal care and was at its lowest among infants aged less than one; just 7 per cent of those children used formal care (see Figure 2.2). However, for the first time in 2005, the ABS defined care as

excluding pre-school on the basis that pre-school is concerned with education rather than child care (ABS, 2006: 2). So in these figures the proportion of 4 to 5 year old children using formal care falls as many of these children moved into pre-school. 257,100 children attended pre-school and a quarter of those also used other formal care services (ABS, 2006: 24, 41).

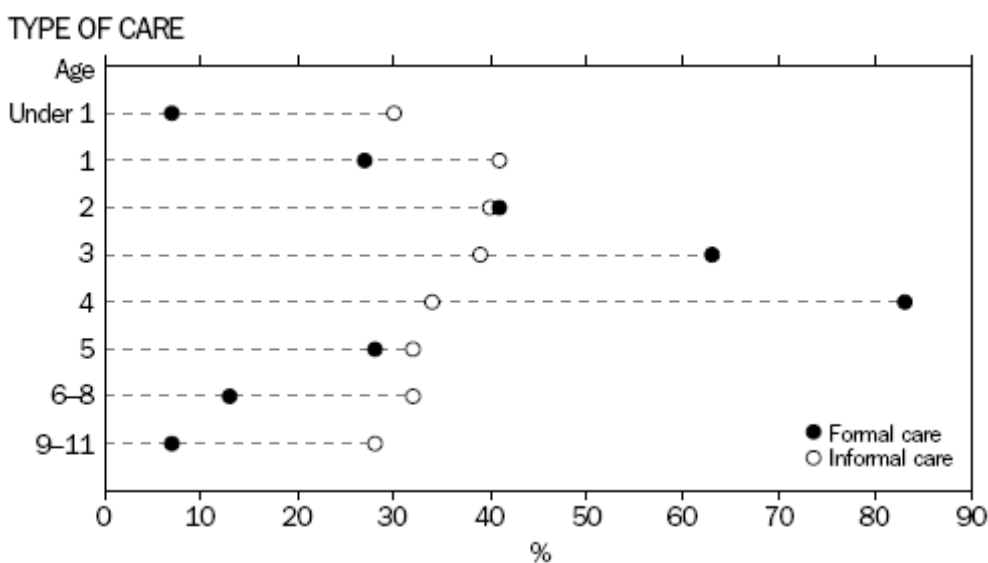
**Figure 2.2: Proportion of children using childcare by age, excluding pre-school**



Source: ABS, 2006: 4. Notes: (a) Aged 0-12 years.

In June 2002, when ABS included pre-school as formal care, 83 per cent among 4 year olds attended ECEC (see Figure 2.3). Many children start school when they are five years old, leading to lower rates of attendance at ECEC services among children of that age.

**Figure 2.3: Proportion of Children using child care by age, including pre-school**



Source: ABS, 2003: 4

Most children in long day care attended for between 10 and 19 hours (36.5 per cent) or 5 to 9 hours (23 per cent) (ABS, 2006: 17). Most children who went to pre-school (40 per cent) did so for between 10 and 14 hours per week (ABS, 2006: 40).

Many children require additional ECEC services. During a period of four weeks, additional formal care was required for 106,100 children aged 0-4, or 8.5 per cent of children that age (ABS, 2006: 30). Nearly half of these children needed long day care services<sup>5</sup> (ABS, 2006: 31). The most common reason given for the need for extra care was work related (46 per cent) (ABS, 2006: 32).

Availability was the main reason given for why children had not attended care that they required. For 46 per cent formal care was booked out or had no places; cost was the main reason for 13 per cent.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are underrepresented in government funded approved child care places. They comprise 4.2 per cent of the population of children aged less than 12, but just 1.5 per cent of children using child care (ACOSS, 2006: 6). Child care attendance is also lower among children who live in regional and remote areas (SCRGSP, 2005: 14.15). Children with disabilities are also underrepresented, making up 8.2 per cent of the population of children aged less than 12 years, but only 2.1 per cent of the children in approved child care (ACOSS, 2006: 6). Children from non-English speaking backgrounds and children from low income families make up a greater proportion of child care attendees than they do in the population of children aged 0-12 (SCRGSP, 2005: 14.15).

There are currently no comprehensive and comparable data collections on pre-school attendance in Australia (AIHW, 2005b: 65). However, the SCRGSP (2005: 14.17) shows that fewer children in regional and remote areas attend pre-school than their peers and that only just over half of children with disabilities are going to pre-school. Children from Indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds are well represented at pre-schools. However, for each of these groups there is considerable variation between states and territories.

### *Licensing and regulation*

Each Australian state and territory has its own licensing requirements and regulatory regime (OECD, 2006: 269). The diversity of government departments responsible for child care and pre-school education have resulted in a broad array of regulations. Some jurisdictions regulate for a range of care settings, others only for long day care and not for pre-school or family day care (Press, 2006: 38-9). As an example of the diversity of regulations, the staff to child ratios required for licensed services ranges widely. Regulations include ratios for three year olds which vary from 1:8 to 1:15 and for infants aged less than one year ratios of 1:4 or 1:5 (Press, 2006: 38).

The National Childcare Accreditation Council, established in 1993, administers the Child Care Quality Assurance systems<sup>6</sup>. It is an incorporated association whose

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5 Note that pre-school was not included in this survey as a type of formal care.

6 [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)

chairperson and members are appointed by the federal minister responsible for children's services. In the past decade, the responsibilities of the NCAC expanded to include family day care and outside school hours care in addition to its original focus on long day care (NCAC, 2006: 3-4). The Child Care Quality Assurance systems are not licensing systems, but rather a "standard of quality beyond the minimum requirements described by licensing regulations" (NCAC, 2006: 4). While compliance with Child Care Quality Assurance can result in accreditation, child care services are not required to seek accreditation.

Pre-schools do not participate in the national Child Care Quality Assurance systems. Some comply with some of the state and territory requirements for child care services, such as licensing and health checks, others follow public pre-school service registration processes which include set curriculums and staff professional development.

### *Staff training*

Requirements for training among ECEC staff vary widely across jurisdictions. Most states do not require teacher qualifications among long day care centre staff, whereas pre-schools are generally staffed by teachers (Press, 2006: 40). As an example of this variety, the national accreditation standard requires one staff member for every ten children aged less than 3 years to have a 2-4 year tertiary qualification (Press, 2006: 41). Licensing rules in Victoria require one staff member qualified with 2 years of training for every 15 children, whereas in Western Australia, one staff member for each age group is required to have 2-4 years training, and the ACT requires every second contact staff member to have 2 years of training. Teachers with early childhood qualifications are only required in both pre-schools and long day care in New South Wales.

Among workers providing Federal Government approved child care in 2004, 55 per cent of staff had formal qualifications in 2004 (SCRGSP, 2005: 14.22). The proportion of staff that had either formal qualifications or three years of relevant experience ranged from 75 per cent in New South Wales, to 57 per cent in the ACT. In pre-school services, the proportion of staff with relevant qualifications ranged from 69 per cent in the Northern Territory to 46 per cent in Victoria.

### *Employment conditions*

In May 2004, nearly all Australian child care workers were women (97 per cent), the majority (71 per cent) worked part-time hours and nearly half of them held casual jobs that did not offer paid leave for sickness or holidays (Rooney and Whitehouse, 2006: 139). In 2004, the average hourly earnings of child care workers was \$14.90, compared to an average in male employment of over \$20 (for example carpentry and joinery qualified tradespersons earned \$23 per hour and unqualified food factory hands earned \$21.30) (Rooney and Whitehouse, 2006: 140). Such poor working conditions, particularly wage rates, have led to well-trained people leaving the ECEC system (McDonald, 2002: 201). It has been estimated that staff leaving their positions is the cause of 50 per cent of vacancies which arise among child care staff and 80 per cent of child care coordinators (Press, 2006: 43).

### Data sources

The *Child Care Survey* is conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Bureau has conducted surveys of child care since 1969, with the survey changing slightly over time. The latest Child Care Survey was conducted in 2005, prior to that in 2002. The Survey focuses on patterns of child care use and care requirements and use of government assistance programs. Publications and survey data are available from [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) (catalogue number 4402.0).

The *Census of Child Care Services* has occurred regularly since 1986. The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs collects data about the services, the staff and the children who attend. For example: the numbers and types of services, hours of operation, the provision of pre-school programs, staff training, fees, patterns of attendance and child demographic information. The most recent report was published in 2004. For all reports see:  
[http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/04\\_census.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/04_census.htm)

The *Children's Services National Minimum Data Set* is being developed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), an Australian Government statutory authority responsible for welfare and health statistics and information. The AIHW has developed national minimum data set which is yet to be implemented. This was developed by the Children's Services Data Working Group to provide "comprehensive" data on child care and pre-school services.

For more information see the *Final Report on the Development of the Children's Services National Minimum Standard Data Set*:

- <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cfs/frdcsnmds/frdcsnmds.pdf>  
and
- <http://www.aihw.gov.au/chilyouth/childrenservices/index.cfm>

The AIHW also produces technical reports, for example on data comparability in existing children's services data sets.

*Australia's Welfare* has been published by the AIHW every two years since 1993. The institute compiles existing data sources in its report which includes a section about ECEC services including provision, use, demand and affordability (AIHW, 2005a: 82-102). For the full *Australia's Welfare* series go to:  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/3021>

AIHW also produces *A Picture of Australia's Children*, which is the third in a series of three publications focused on children's health and wellbeing (AIHW, 2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b).

The *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics of Australia (HILDA)* survey is a national longitudinal household panel survey, which has run in yearly waves since 2001. The survey includes a child care component which examines use, demand and satisfaction. The survey has guaranteed funding from the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Communities and Indigenous Affairs for 12 waves. The survey is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, the Australian Council for Education Research and the Australian Institute for Family Studies. For more information see: <http://melbourneinstitute.com/hilda/>

The *Report on Government Services* is an annual publication by the Australian Government Productivity Commission produced by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. The series began in 1995 and the most recent report was published in 2007. It provides a detailed compilation of data on child care and pre-school service use, staff, monitoring, provision etc. To access the publications go to:

[http://www.pc.gov.au/publications/publications/publications?mode=results&queries\\_by\\_type\\_query=Publication&queries\\_by\\_report\\_type\\_query=Government%20Service%20Provision%20Report](http://www.pc.gov.au/publications/publications/publications?mode=results&queries_by_type_query=Publication&queries_by_report_type_query=Government%20Service%20Provision%20Report)

### Timeline

1996	Conservative coalition of Liberal-National parties elected to the Australian Government. Budget 1996-07 abolishes operational subsidies for community based long day care centres. Level of Child Care Assistance reduced, means test imposed on childcare cash rebate
1997	
1998	
1999	
2000	Child Care Benefit introduced as part of a new tax system which also saw family allowances changed to Family Tax Benefits A and B.
2001	Child Care Advisory Council final report, <i>Child Care: Beyond 2001</i> , includes recommendation to reconceptualise child care in terms of child development, care and education rather than child minding.
2002	
	Child Care Workforce Think Tank report, <i>Child Care: Beyond 2001</i> , advocates improved pay and conditions in the ECEC workforce and better retaining and attracting skilled staff.
2003	Australian Government releases a consultation paper <i>Towards a National Agenda for Early Childhood</i> .
2004	Child Care Tax Rebate introduced Draft <i>National Agenda for Early Childhood</i> released
2005	
2006	
2007	Final <i>National Agenda for Early Childhood</i> recommends action in the area of education and care. Australian Labor Party elected to the Australian Government and establishes a Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Childcare.

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### 2.3 Canada

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Population <sup>a</sup>	32.2 million		
Population of children under compulsory school age <sup>a</sup>	Under 6 = 2,074,860		
Population density (per km) <sup>b</sup>	3.1		
Compulsory school age	6 years		
ECEC participation rates <sup>c</sup>	24% 0-6 year old children accessed to regulated child care. 95% of 5 year olds and 50% of 4 year olds attend part-time kindergarten		
GDP per capita <sup>d</sup>	US\$35,700		
Child poverty rate <sup>f</sup>	14.9		
Labour force participation rates:	Labour force participation	Unemployment	Part-time employment as % employment
Male (2006) <sup>g</sup>	82.2	6.6	10.9
Female (2006) <sup>g</sup>	73.5	6.1	31.9
Mothers of children under compulsory school age (2005)	0-2 years old 69% 3-5 years old 76%		
Family policy			
Maternity leave <sup>1</sup>	Maternity and parental leave are determined by provincial and territorial legislation. Federal Employment Insurance provides for 15 weeks of maternity leave at 55% of earnings. Provinces and territories further determine length, conditions and eligibility for maternity and parental leave. Quebec operates its own flexible Parental Insurance Plan.		
Paternity leave <sup>1</sup>	3-5 weeks available annually in Quebec, British Columbia, New Brunswick		
Parental leave <sup>1</sup>	Parental leave of 35 weeks is paid at 55% of earnings (with the exception of Quebec). <sup>1</sup>		
Family allowances <sup>j</sup>	The federal government pays monthly benefits to families including the means-test Canada Child Tax Benefit to the primary care giver; the National Child Benefit Supplement to low-income families and Child Disability Benefit.		
Income support for parents	Each province or territory pays income support to families with very low incomes.		

Notes: (a) OECD, 2006; (b) Doherty et al., 2003: 15; (c) OECD, 2006: 76; (d) CIA, 2007; (f) UNICEF, 2005: 4; (g) OECD, 2007a: 247-8; (h) OECD, 2007b: Table 3.2; (i) Friendly and Beach, 2005: 56,86,114; (j) CRA, 2007.

#### Summary description of ECEC policy development

The context for Canada's system starts with the fact that Canada is a huge land mass with extreme variance in population throughout the country. The population of the

provinces and territories vary from the two largest provinces 11.4 million people in Ontario and 7.2 million in Quebec, to the smallest territories 37,400 people in the Northwest Territories and 28,700 in Yukon Territory (Doherty et al., 2003: 17).

At first glance, the arrangements for early childhood education and care in Canada seem overwhelmingly complex. At the risk of over-simplification, the Canadian situation can be better understood by understanding some of the key differences.

Perhaps the most significant difference is between Quebec and the rest of the Canadian provinces/territories. Historically, Quebec has considered itself (and many Canadians concur with this) a nation with autonomous rights to set policy, establish funding, regulate, etc. This means that Quebec rarely engages with the other provinces/territories in multilateral discussions and agreements with the federal government and has managed to secure for itself the right to establish its own programs. This extends to a separate taxation system, separate immigration policy, separate labour market training schemes, separate family programs, etc.

Secondly, First Nations and Indigenous Peoples (FNIP) have also followed a different path than the provinces/territories. Although FNIP groups live throughout Canada – increasingly in the urban centres – the federal government has taken responsibility for providing extra funding for FNIP programs and FNIP groups have demanded greater control over the management and operation of their programs.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECEC) for children in Canada refers to arrangements for the care and education of children aged 0-12 years, not including compulsory public schooling. The care and education of these young children is conducted through a multitude of arrangements ranging from kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs in public schools to private informal or formal child care, centre-based to care within a family home, commercial to non-profit to public. Support programs for parents and caregivers, such as Family Resource Centres and Early Learning Centres and specialized programs oriented to specific target populations also exist. Five general categories can be identified as:

- Kindergarten
- Regulated child care programs
- Cash Benefits
- Support Services (such as family resource centres)
- Unregulated Child Care

This audit concentrates primarily on the first three, kindergarten, regulated child care and cash benefits to parents to assist with child care fees.

Across Canada, all five year olds have a legal entitlement (usually non-compulsory) to part-time kindergarten programs operated as part of the public education system. Kindergarten programs in francophone schools across Canada usually operate for a full day. Roughly half of four year olds attend part-time kindergarten in the schools and also organized by the education system. Ontario is the only province where 4 year olds are entitled to free part-time “junior kindergarten” in the schools for 2½ hours, five days a week. Elsewhere, “junior kindergarten or pre-kindergarten”

programs are operated non-systematically on a part-time basis and usually targeted to Aboriginal children, children with special needs and populations deemed to be “at risk”, also on a part-time basis. Programs are free to parents. It is estimated that about 98% of eligible children attend Kindergarten at age 5 and where it is available at age 4, approximately 85-90% of children attend (Friendly et al., 2007) Kindergarten programs are well established and are the only truly universal ECEC program offered to Canadian children under the age of six. However, these are viewed exclusively as “educational” programs with no attempt to meet employment needs of working parents.

Historically, the provincial governments’ role was to pass legislation to license and regulate child care programs and to cost share the operating costs of the services on behalf of working parents deemed to be “in need” or whose children were otherwise deemed to be “at risk”. With the exception of programs such as Aboriginal ECEC services, and ECEC services for the military and new immigrants, ECEC services in Canada are the responsibility of Canadian provincial and territorial governments. There is also growing awareness in Canada of the value and importance of educational/developmental services for all children in their early years, not just those with employed parents. Regulated child care in Canada is primarily governed by child care legislation and regulations in each province and territory.

In most provinces and territories, one Ministry is responsible for developing policy and legislation, coordinating planning, licensing child care programs, ensuring compliance with the regulations and administering funding. Often there are decentralized ministries with regional offices.

Child care and education policy are both in provincial jurisdiction; taxation issues are shared jurisdiction; payments under Employment Insurance are under federal jurisdiction. From the 1960’s through to the mid-1990’s, child care policy in all provinces and territories was shaped by federal willingness to cost-share (50-50) provincial/territorial expenditures on child care that met certain criteria (being directed at families in poverty or likely to be in poverty; encouraging employment). Education was also funded on a block grant basis, cost-shared 50% federal govt, 50% provincial.

In 1995, the primary mechanism for federal funding of child care services, the Canada Assistance Plan was cancelled. From 1995 on, federal funding for child care was part of a block grant with no strings attached subsumed under the CHST (Canada Health and Social Transfer), including no necessity to spend on child care (Friendly, 2006: 11). In this way, the federal government vacated its role in ECEC and services across provinces/territories began to show even more differentiation. At the extreme ends, for example, Ontario used this opportunity to reduce its expenditures on both child care and kindergarten; at the other end of the spectrum, Quebec used the opportunity to introduce a radical family policy reform.

Advocates continued to press the federal government and in 1998, the federal government announced a National Children’s Agenda, making early childhood development a national political priority (Cool, 2007: 2). A number of major initiatives followed in rapid succession. In December 2000, the federal government extended maternity and parental leave to cover virtually a full year of the child’s life.

Take-up of paid leave by Canadian families has been very high, reducing the need for expansion of infant ECEC facilities.

In addition, the federal government provided funding that provinces could use for Early Childhood Education and Care services and for related child development programs. The Early Childhood Development Initiatives Agreement (ECDI) was reached with all provinces and territories except Quebec in September 2000, providing for \$2.2 billion of federal funds to flow over 5 years to provinces. The significance was not the size of the budget but the renewal of the federal funding role in this area, which had been suspended with the ending of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1995. Provincial and territorial governments agreed to use this funding to improve and expand services in four key areas: (a) healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy, (b) parenting and family supports, (c) early childhood development, learning and care, and (d) community supports. The agreement included provisions for provinces/territories to report regularly to their citizens on expenditures and child development. Some provinces and territories used this funding to enhance their existing early childhood care and education services; others ploughed the money solely into health-related programs.

In early 2003, as a supplement to the ECDI agreement, the federal and provincial/territorial governments (except Quebec) signed the Multilateral Framework Agreement (MFA) which provided approximately \$1 billion of federal funding over five years to support investments in early learning and child care in particular. The objective of this initiative was to promote early childhood development but also to support the participation of parents in employment and training by improving access to affordable, quality early learning and child care programs and services (Social Union, n.d.: Multilateral Framework). The Agreement required that spending on early learning and child care be based on the principles of availability and accessibility, affordability, quality, inclusiveness and parental choice.

In 2004, the federal government announced its intention to create a national system of early learning and child care following four principles Quality, Universal inclusiveness, Accessibility and Developmental [programming] (known as the QUAD principles) (Cool, 2007: 6). A national agreement did not occur due to provincial concerns about reporting requirements and differences about the use of the funding. Negotiations with each of the provinces and territories separately led to nine bilateral agreements which were signed in 2005 (Friendly, 2006: 13). In the agreements, the provincial governments gave an undertaking to develop ECEC action plans on the QUAD principles (Friendly, 2006: 13). The federal government committed to 5 years of funding in each agreement following the development of the action plans. Manitoba and Ontario released their action plans and commenced five year funding agreements. Quebec, while not signing a bilateral agreement, negotiated a funding agreement which would support its existing ECEC system (Cool, 2007: 7).

January 2006 saw a change at the federal level to a minority conservative government. The new government announced that the bilateral agreements on ECEC would be terminated (Friendly, 2006: 13). After one year, federal funding would cease, instead being directed to cash payments for parents. The cash payment, the misnamed Universal Child Care Benefit is a form of family allowance paying \$1,200 annually per child under six years, but taxed so that single-earner families end up with more than two-earner families or single parents. (CRA, 2007: 19; Canada's Universal

Child Care Plan, 2007). An additional \$250 million, initially targeted to workplaces and companies was eventually transferred to the provinces and territories for space expansion in 2007.

### *First Nations and Indigenous Peoples' Child Care*

Canada's First Nations and Indigenous Peoples include First Nations and non-status native people (on- and off-reserve), Metis and Inuit. Many FNIP live in remote and/or northern areas, but there are also large southern, urban populations. Today, the majority of FNIP live off reserves, often in large urban centres.

**Table 2.2: Number of Children 0-12 identifying with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples, 2001**

Age	North American Indian	Metis	Inuit	Multiple	Other FNIP
0-4	69,060	25,390	5,630	650	1,910
5-9	123,481	29,080	5,930	765	2,070
10-14	69,270	30,245	5,910	680	2,180

**Source:** Friendly, Beach, Ferns and Turiano, 2007

All FNIPs have larger than average families, making early childhood education and care an especially important issue. The maintenance of indigenous culture is a major issue for all FNIPs. FNIP organizations believe that culturally sensitive early childhood education as it pertains to training and service delivery must reflect traditional cultural norms and practices. FNIP groups are keen to operate and control programs by their own communities. Since nearly half of all Aboriginal children live in cities, the National Association of Friendship Centres cooperated with governments at the federal, provincial and municipal level to implement 23 Aboriginal Head Start programs that are not located on reserves (Mahon and Jenson, 2006: 12-13).

Generally, funding for on-reserve social programs (including child care) is the responsibility of the Government of Canada (Friendly and Beach, 2005: xxiii). Some provinces still regulate on-reserve FNIP child care, others do not. FNIP governments and organizations usually have responsibility for administration of funds and developing programs. Prior to the announcement of the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative and Aboriginal Head Start in 1995, there was very little spending for FNIP ECEC in most of Canada.

### *ECEC in Canadian provinces*

Each of the provinces and territories has its own ECEC system. In general, kindergarten programs for children in the year before school are treated as a public matter and child care programs as family and private sector matters (Friendly, 2006: 14). The provinces and territories all regulate child care, but with wide variations in terms of quality, training, fees and monitoring; the one common factor is that no Territory or Province provides a universal entitlement to child care (CRRU, 2004: 4). Kindergarten services, on the other hand, are more consistent across the different jurisdictions. A wide range of child care services are provided across the country, with some jurisdictions regulating many forms of service and some just a few. Kindergarten services, while generally targeted at four year olds, vary in terms of the

length of time that children attend and the range of younger children for whom the programs are sometimes oriented; for example Aboriginal children, children with disabilities, low-income children and three-year olds.

Other differences between provinces and territories will be set out in the remainder of the document. Here, however, we provide a snapshot of ECEC policy in three provinces<sup>7</sup>: Quebec which provides regulated child care services to nearly half of all the children who attend child care in Canada<sup>8</sup>; Manitoba which has developed some innovative ECEC policy and Alberta which has recently spent the least per child care space in Canada and has relatively greater numbers of private providers. These descriptions are preceded by Table 2.1 which provides a brief summary of the types of child care services available in each jurisdiction and patterns of kindergarten provision.

### *Quebec*

Quebec is one of the most populous provinces in Canada and is home to more than 7 million people (Doherty et al., 2003: 17). Quebec is often proffered as the best model of ECEC service delivery in Canada (see, for example, Friendly, 2006: 15). ECEC in Quebec, as in other parts of Canada, consists of two streams. Kindergarten services, or *Maternelle*, are provided for 23.5 hours per week for five year olds (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 56). Attendance is not compulsory. Four year olds living in Montreal generally attend *Maternelle* or, if living in rural areas, *Passe-Partout*. Regulated and unregulated child care services are also available in Quebec in home- or centre-based formats, at a cost to parents of \$7 per day.

Current ECEC policy has its roots in the 1996 *Parti Québécois* government plan to develop a comprehensive policy for children from 0 to 12 years old. The three components of the policy were: an integrated allowance for infants and young children; expanded maternity and paternity leave provisions; and the development of universal care and education services for children younger than school age (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 64).

In 1997, a single ministry was made responsible for early childhood care and education policy for 0-4 year olds, the *Ministère de la Famille et de l'Enfance*. Kindergarten services for 5 year old children remained the responsibility of the ministry of education.

New ECEC policy was implemented over the next four years, starting with the extension of kindergarten services to the full day for five year olds and the creation of places for four year olds in regulated ECEC centres for \$5 per day. By 2000, all ages from 0-4 were incorporated into the \$5 program. The new program first favoured not-for-profit services, establishing a process of converting for-profit child care centres into not-for-profit (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 65). In addition, in the four years from

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<sup>7</sup> Thanks to Rianne Mahon for suggesting these three provinces for detailed investigation.

<sup>8</sup> In 2004, Quebec provided 321,732 regulated child care spaces; 745,254 spaces were provided in the whole of Canada (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 204).

1997 to 2000, Quebec phased out fee subsidies, concentrating on funding ECEC for 0-4 year olds through operational grants (Beach and Friendly, 2005: 1).

The election in 2003 of a Liberal government saw a change in Quebec ECEC policy development. The new government announced it would create new opportunities for for-profit services. This government also raised fees to \$7 per day, reduced operational funding and increased finances available to for-profit services. The following year, operational grants were cut again and capital funding ceased. Despite these recent setbacks, Quebec has been able to phase out its fee-subsidy program and create a “much-demanded” \$7 per day child care program. The program is extremely popular and the main reason why the Liberal Government was not able to curtail it was because of the outpouring of support for the program.

The *Educational Childcare Act* was adopted in 2005. The act required all child care centres to provide education programs and mandated that centres could not charge more than \$7 per day (Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine, 2005). In addition, the Act entitled parents to 10 hours of continuous centre-based child care each day; all centres were required to be open for at least 10 hours so that children could remain in the one place while their parents worked. Previously, not all centres were open for the full day and some children needed to move from one centre to another during their parents’ working hours.

Quebec operates its own maternity, adoptive, paternity and parental leave plan, the *Quebec Parental Insurance Plan Quebec*. The plan is popular, generous and flexible, making benefits available to both employed and self-employed workers. Parents have two options: the Basic Plan or the Special Plan providing some flexibility to parents to determine the duration of the leave and the income replacement rate.

### *Manitoba*

At 1.12 million people in 2001, the population of Manitoba makes it a middle-sided province in Canada (Doherty et al., 2003: 17). In 2001, there were 86,000 children aged between 0 and 6 years. Just over half of the population lived in Winnipeg.

In 2000, the newly elected New Democratic Party government in Manitoba raised funding for child care by 18 per cent; the first significant funding increase for child care in more than a decade (CCCM, 2007a). The following year, in 2001, the government sought public comment on *A Vision for Child Care and Development in Manitoba* by the Child Care Regulatory Review Committee (2001), which advocated universal, accessible, affordable and quality child care.

In response, the government announced a Five Year Plan on Child Care which aimed to expand and improve the sector and make its services more affordable for families (Manitoba Family Services and Housing, 2002). Initiatives included raising wages for child care workers, more training for providers, creating 5,000 more spaces, making more families eligible for fee subsidies and expanding the nursery school program which already existed for three and four year olds and linking it with other early childhood programs (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 95). These goals were to be achieved by March 2007. This action on ECEC services occurred within the context of *Healthy Child Manitoba*, an interdepartmental approach to ‘child-centred public policy’ (Government of Manitoba, n.d.). Since 2002, the government has released

reports annually on early childhood development detailing the state of affairs with regards to health, education and family and community supports (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005). However, the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba (CCCM, 2007b: 1) criticised the government for a lack of progress under the Five Year Plan, arguing that the number of licensed child care places only rose by 8 per cent and that it became harder to qualify for subsidies.

Manitoba was the first province to sign a bilateral agreement with the federal government in 2005 and the first to develop a plan of action (Prentice, 2006). The new plan, *Manitoba's Action Plan: Next Steps*, outlined the intention to use the funding promised by the federal government to create community based hubs for early learning and child care which would also provide support to families (Mahon and Jenson, 2006: 30). The Government of Manitoba has also been actively promoting the development of child care centres within school grounds (Mahon and Jenson, 2006: 28).

Kindergarten is provided by public and private schools to children in the year before school (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 86). Both public and private schools implement the provincial kindergarten curriculum. The Department for Education Citizenship and Youth mandates part-time attendance by 5 year olds in kindergarten (Mahon and Jenson, 2006: 28, 15-Table 5). In Winnipeg, 4 year olds can also access educational services which were known as nurseries. There are a number of school divisions within Winnipeg, some of which focus particularly on children with special needs or francophone children. Compared to many other Canadian cities, Winnipeg has a high population of Aboriginal children, 17 per cent of all children aged 0-4 years, and the city has developed inclusive local programs and ECEC services with an Aboriginal cultural focus (Mahon and Jenson, 2006: Table 1).

### *Alberta*

The population of Alberta is 3 million (Doherty et al., 2003: 17). In 2003, there were 117,300 children aged 0-5 years in the province (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 112). In recent years, Alberta ECEC policy has focused on direct support for families to provide them with 'choice' in their use of ECEC services (Mahon and Jenson, 2006: 43(note)).

In 1994, the Alberta government presented a three year budget plan which aimed to reduce spending on child care by 20 per cent (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 122). The following year, a review of claims for child care subsidies saw 20 per cent of families lose their entitlement. In 1998, operational grants to preschools were reduced by more than half and then eradicated entirely. The associated savings, coupled with funds from the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Strategy, were used to raise the level of child care subsidies and expand eligibility.

Following its creation in 1999, Alberta's new Ministry of Children's Services directed considerable responsibility for child care to local authorities, known as the Child and Family Services Authorities (Jenson and Mahon, 2002: 9). The 18 authorities received funding from the province and were then accountable for administering those funds in local child care service delivery. The provincial government retained responsibility for child care regulation and standards. Alberta's funds in 2001-02 from the Early Childhood Development Initiative were given to the Child and Family

Services Authorities who made their own plans to use the money in consultation with local communities (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 123). Locally oriented rather than province wide plans were developed for the funding.

In 2003, the Commission for Learning, which was established by the Government of Alberta, presented its final report, *Every Child Learns, Every Child Succeeds*. The two most significant recommendations regarding kindergarten, to expand the program so that children attend for two years prior to entering school and to make some kindergarten programs operate for full rather than half days, were among the few recommendations which were rejected by the government (Alberta Education, 2006).

## **ECEC provision and administration**

### *Auspices*

On the whole, within the provincial and territorial governments, education and care treated as separate concerns (OECD, 2006: 298). Child care policy responsibility tends to be located within ministries for social or community services, while preschool policy is the responsibility of ministries for education (CRRU, 2004: 4). In most provinces and territories, one Ministry is responsible for developing policy and legislation, coordinating planning, licensing child care programs, ensuring compliance with the regulations and administering funding. Often there are decentralized ministries with regional offices.

Public school kindergarten programs are operated within provincial jurisdiction under the auspices of provincial/territorial Ministries of Education. Kindergarten programs are free and generally take place in schools. In Prince Edward Island and a few programs in Alberta, kindergartens are operated as part of the child care system

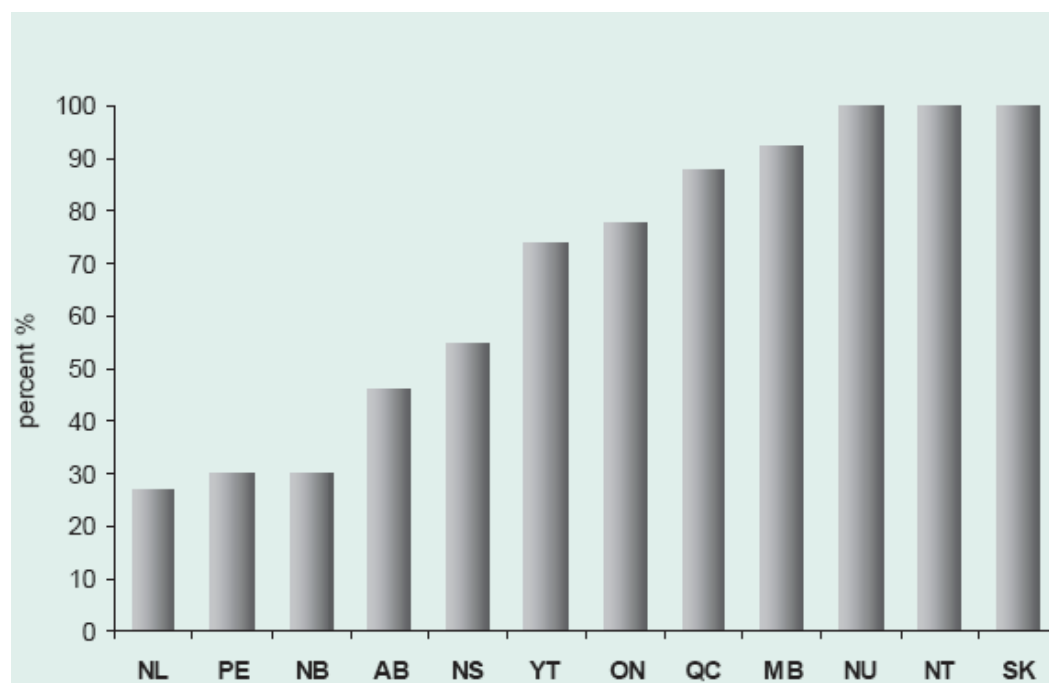
In Quebec, responsibility for kindergarten programs lies with the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/>). In 2005, a new ministry was created, the Ministère de la Famille et des Aînés, taking responsibility for child care policy from Ministère de l'Emploi, de la Solidarité sociale et de la Famille (<http://www.mfa.gouv.qc.ca/>). Similarly, in Manitoba, policy responsibility for kindergarten lies with the Department for Education, Citizenship and Youth (<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/index.html>) and for child care with Manitoba Family Services and Housing (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/>). In Alberta kindergarten is administered by Alberta Education (<http://education.alberta.ca/>) and child care by Alberta Children's Services (<http://child.alberta.ca/home/index.cfm>).

### *Key providers*

Child care centres are organized by public organizations (mainly local governments, and sometimes schools), non-profit organizations (these can be large organizations or small community programs) and for-profit commercial operations. Throughout Canada, 80 per cent of childcare services were not-for-profit in 2004 (CRRU, 2004: 4). However, there was considerable diversity between jurisdictions, and while for-profit centres constituted a small proportion of centres in Canada overall, in some provinces they formed a large portion of the childcare sector. Figure 2.4 shows that in some jurisdictions, namely Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, virtually all child care places were in not-for-profit provides. While in others, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, most places

were in for-profit centres. Kindergartens in Canada are usually located within the public education system operated by the provinces and territories (Friendly and Beach, 2005: xviii).

**Figure 2.4: Percent of centre-based child care spaces that are not-for-profit by province/territory 2004**



Source: CRRU, 2004:9

In Quebec in 2004, 88 per cent of centre-based child care places were in not-for-profit centres (CRRU, 2004: 9). Since Quebec child care places accounted for 43 per cent of all child care places for 0-12 year olds in Canada, the Quebec not-for-profit centres were a significant portion of the total number of centres which were not-for-profit in the entire country. In 2004, most of these places were school-board operated spaces for school aged children (141,977), with a smaller number of other not-for-profit centre-based places (68,274) and 29,437 for-profit centres and garderies (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 59). The larger proportion of not-for-profit centre places arose in a context in which, from 2000 to 2003, the Quebec government pursued a policy of expanding the not-for-profit child care sector and encouraged the conversion of for-profit centres into not-for-profit centres (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 65). Despite this policy, however, the number of new for-profit spaces between 2001 and 2004 was double that of the previous four years. The policy was overturned upon the election in 2003 of a Liberal government which announced it would create new opportunities for for-profit services. Kindergarten in Quebec is delivered in public or private schools (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 56).

In Manitoba, like Quebec, most child care places (92 per cent) are located with not-for-profit providers (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 91). The government of Manitoba has given funding preference to not-for-profit providers (as will be detailed in the next section (4.3). Kindergarten is provided through public and private schools (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 86).

In contrast, Alberta has the largest proportion of for-profit providers of the larger provinces. Of the 41,405 places in day care centres and nursery schools, 54 per cent were located with for-profit providers in 2004 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 118). However, there were more non-profit centres (636) than for-profit centres (542). Most for-profit spaces were for the full day, whereas most not-for-profit spaces were for a part day. Kindergarten service, known in Alberta as Early Childhood Services, may be provided by for-profit providers or by public or private schools (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 114). Kindergarten can also be provided by not-for-profit specialist providers outside of schools, although no service was authorised to do so in 2004 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 114).

In 2007, 123 Busy Beavers Learning Centres, a new child care operator in Canada linked to the Australian company ABC Learning Centres, registered in Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia (Cribb, 2007). Centres in large cities in the three provinces reported receiving letters offering an evaluation of their sales potential (Cribb, 2007; Myers, 2007). Advocates in Canada have historically opposed for-profit child care services and even before the appearance of corporate child care, encouraged the New Democratic Party to introduce legislation restricting funding to the not-for-profit sector. In 2007, a private member's bill was introduced into the Canadian Federal parliament entitled the Early Learning and Child Care Act. The Act is now at Third Reading and is due to be brought back for a vote in the House of Commons in February 2008. All opposition parties support the bill. If the Prime Minister does not want it to pass, he will have to refuse to give it "royal proclamation" (Code Blue, 2007).

Public school kindergarten programs are operated within provincial jurisdiction under the auspices of provincial/territorial Ministries of Education. Kindergarten programs are free and generally take place in schools. In Prince Edward Island and a few programs in Alberta, kindergartens are operated as part of the child care system. Less than 2% of children in Canada attend private schools, so very little kindergarten operates in private schools.

#### *Funding mechanisms and affordability*

The OECD (2006: 297) reported in Starting Strong II that Canadian spending on ECEC for 2-6 year olds equalled about 0.2 per cent of GDP<sup>9</sup>. Across the multiple jurisdictions responsible for ECEC in Canada, all four of the primary mechanisms to enhance affordability are used, operational funding to child care centres, free universal preschool, fee subsidies and tax relief (Purcal and Fisher, 2006).

Federal government funding mechanisms had, until recently, been largely limited to grants to the provinces. Under the Early Childhood Development Agreement from 2000 and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Care from 2006, the federal government has provided funds to the provincial and territorial governments to support their ECEC programs (Government of Canada, 2007: 51). The recent funding arrangements developed under a series of bilateral agreements were

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<sup>9</sup> Canada spending on pre-primary education is not available in OECD (2007), Education at a Glance.

terminated by the federal government in 2006. The federal government instead moved to a system of fee subsidies. The new scheme, the Universal Child Care Benefit, provide cash payments of \$100 each month paid directly to families for use on any form of child care (Government of Canada, 2007: 1).

Another federal scheme, the Child Care Expense Deduction is also designed to reduce child care costs for families. It allows parents who are working or studying to deduct child care costs from their annual taxable income to the value of \$7,000 for a child aged less than 7 years and \$10,000 for a child with a disability (Kershaw, 2007: 8).

Operational grants and fee subsidies are the primary child care funding mechanisms used by provincial and territorial governments. Fee subsidies, mostly targeted towards low income families, are used by all provinces and territories with the exception of Quebec and Nunavut. On the whole, child care costs for most children are not subsidised because so few families met the low income eligibility criteria. The proportion of children in registered child care who received fee subsidies in 2004 ranged from 13 per cent in British Columbia to 57 per cent in Yukon. In Alberta, 16 per cent of children using registered care received a subsidy compared to 45 per cent in Manitoba (Beach and Friendly, 2005: 8).

Parental contributions to child care averaged 50 per cent of total spending across the country (excluding Quebec), however this contribution ranged from around one-third to more than four-fifths when compared by province (Friendly, 2007: 4). Most provinces provide some direct operating funding to centres, variously named as “operating grants/funds, wage grants, accreditation funding, as well as some maintenance/small capital grants, professional development grants and grants for children with special needs.

There are vast differences in the amount which the provinces and territories spend on child care. Comparing total child care spending per child living in the province or territory (rather than spending per child care space), Quebec topped the table in 2004 at \$1,448. Manitoba was the third most generous spending \$407 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 189). Alberta spent the least per child of all the provinces and territories, just \$104.

Quebec phased out its subsidy program over four years from 1997, instead concentrating funding through operational grants. In 2004, Quebec spent more per child care space than any other provincial or territorial government; close to \$5,000 (see Figure 2.4). In fact, total Quebec spending on registered child care for 0-12 year olds equalled more than spending in all the other provinces and territories put together (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 188). In Quebec, nearly all of the funding (\$1.2 million) was for children aged 0-4 years. Public child care spending is provided in the form of operational grants, start-up grants, capital works grants, as well as funding based on the number of child care spaces (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 61).

Manitoba fee subsidies constituted 43 per cent of registered child care funding in 2004, with the remainder being directed through operational grants (Beach and Friendly, 2005: 8). Manitoba provides subsidised child care to families earning below a certain income level and who require care due to employment or educational commitments or because of special need within the family (Friendly and Beach, 2005:

91). Parents using subsidised care usually pay an additional fee of \$2.40 per day. The subsidies can be paid to for-profit, not-for-profit and family child care centres. Not-for-profit centres are additionally eligible for operational grant and start-up grants. Extra grants are made for children with disabilities.

Alberta spending on child care averaged \$816 per child care space in 2004, the lowest in Canada (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 186). Alberta spent three-quarters of the registered child care budget in the form of fee subsidies, the largest proportion dedicated to fees in the whole of Canada (Beach and Friendly, 2005: 8). Fee subsidies are paid directly to centres on behalf of the parents who qualify due to an employment, educational or particular family need, and who also meet income requirements (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 119). Child care centres and family day homes can charge additional fees above the subsidised rate. Some operational grants are also available.

**Figure 2.5: Public spending allocation per child care space by province/territory 2004**



Source: CRRU, 2004:9

In contrast to child care, kindergarten is fully funded by the provincial and territorial governments; parents only pay costs to cover items such as field trips and snacks (Doherty et al., 2003: 40).

Kindergarten (*maternelle*) spending by the Quebec government in 2004 was \$2,000 for four year olds and slightly less for 5 year olds. Four year old students in rural areas attending *passé-partout* were funded at \$970. Quebec provides additional funding for children with special needs (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 61).

It was estimated that Manitoba spent an average of \$3,900 per child for kindergarten education in 2004 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 87).

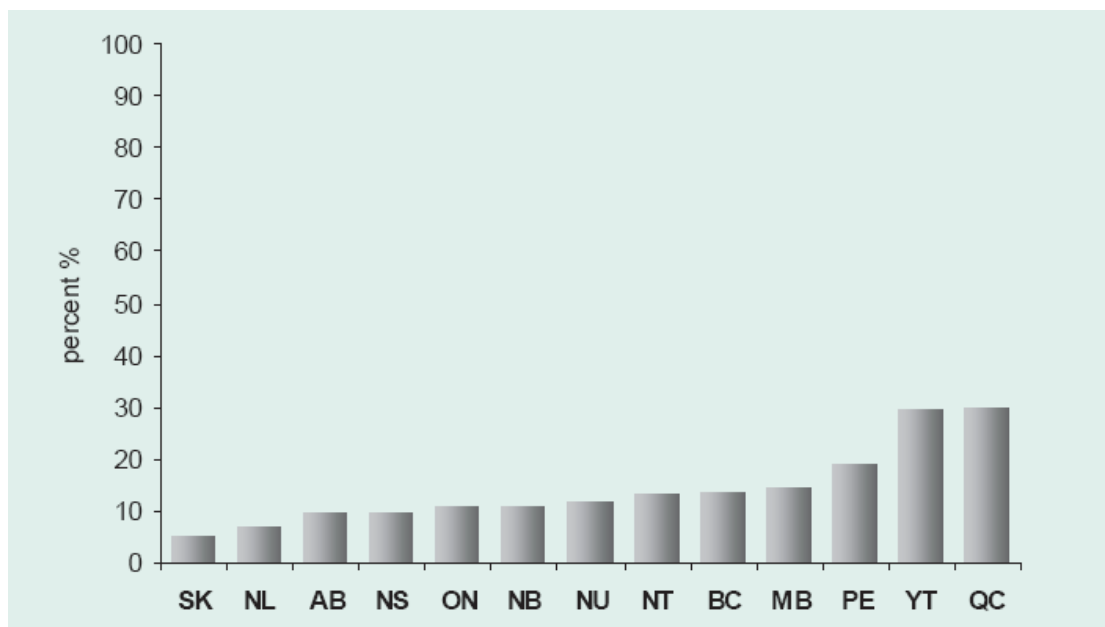
Alberta spending on kindergarten was \$2,272 per child care space (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 115). Kindergartens based in public schools received about twice as much per diem as those in private schools.

#### Access

Summarising the findings of an inquiry into the rights of children in Canada, the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights (2007: 142) wrote:

In 2004, only 15.5% of Canadian children under 12 had access to licensed/regulated child care space, while a 2006 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report found that 24% of Canadian children up to six years of age had access to regulated spaces. That report referred to the number of Canadian three-year-olds in licensed/regulated spaces as “negligible.”

**Figure 2.6: Percentage of children aged 0-12 for whom a regulated child care space was available in 2004, by province/territory**



Source: CRRU, 2004: 6

Figure 2.6 shows the proportion of children aged between 0 and 12 years for whom a regulated child care place was available in 2004. Quebec, at 30 per cent, had child care available for the largest proportion of children. Manitoba provided child care for 14 per cent of children. Alberta had the third smallest coverage, just 9 per cent<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Alberta regulated school-aged care services for the first time in 2004 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 185). Including school age services, the proportion of children for whom there were child care services was 13 per cent. To maintain compatibility with figure NUMBER, the 9 per cent rate was cited.

Most of these services were for children in their preschool years. Rough estimates<sup>11</sup> of the proportion of 0-5 year old children for whom centre-based or family child care services were available revealed that approximately 40 per cent of children in Quebec children, 26 per cent of children in Manitoba and 22 per cent of children in Alberta had access to child care services<sup>12</sup>.

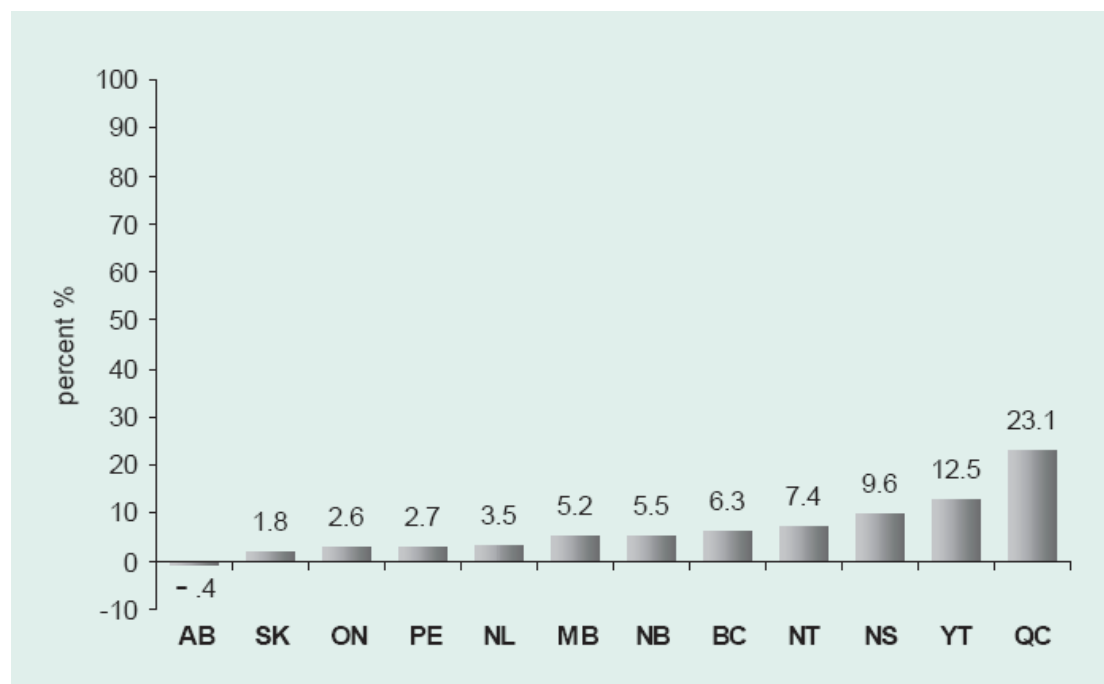
Outside of Quebec, there has been no significant expansion of regulated child care in Canada over the past decade. Less than 20% of children aged 0-6 find a place in a regulated child care service. Long waiting lists exist in community services, including in centres serving children with special needs. The availability of child care spaces rose slightly from 1992 to 2004 in most provinces and territories. Alberta was the notable exception where the number of spaces fell by 0.4 per cent (see Figure 2.7 below). Quebec had the largest increase in availability, up by 23 per cent. In Manitoba, availability increased by 5 per cent. Examining just day care spaces, from 1992 to 2004 the number in Alberta fell by 7 per cent, in Manitoba the number rose by 35 per cent, while in Quebec the number of spaces trebled, rising by 310 per cent (Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada's Child Care Spaces Initiative, 2007:41). Increases in the proportion preschool-aged children using day care centres from 1994-95 to 2002-03 were the greatest in Quebec and Manitoba; while Alberta was the only jurisdiction in which the proportion of children using day care fell (Bushnik, 2006: 16).

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<sup>11</sup> Estimates were calculated using data from Friendly and Beach (2005: 178,185) by summing the number of places in centre-based child care and family child care in each province or territory and dividing the total by the number of children aged 0-5 living in the province or territory. The estimates are only rough because some children aged over 5 would have attended family child care, but in most jurisdictions most places were in centre-based care.

<sup>12</sup> Calculations based on data in Friendly and Beach (2005) available on request.

**Figure 2.7: Change from 1992 to 2004 in the percentage of children aged 0-12 for whom a regulated child care space was available by province/territory**



Source: CRRU, 2004: 7

The Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada's Child Care Spaces Initiative (2007: 14) found that the greatest shortfalls in child care supply were among children in rural and remote areas, Aboriginal children and in official language minority communities. The First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative reported funding 7,000 child care spaces (Services Canada, 2006). Even when operating at full capacity, the Aboriginal Head Start program could only cater for a small proportion of Aboriginal children aged three and four (Health Canada, 2000: 4).

While regulated child care services are required to accommodate children with special needs, all jurisdictions have policies to support inclusion (Doherty et al., 2003: 43). Nonetheless, witnesses to the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights (2007: 142) reported that there were insufficient child care spaces for children with special needs.

In contrast, kindergarten, while not a legislated entitlement across all jurisdictions, is attended by most eligible children. In neither Quebec, Manitoba nor Alberta is kindergarten compulsory and nor is it offered as an entitlement (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 56,86,114). Doherty et al. (2003: 38) estimated that around 95 per cent of all 5 year olds are enrolled in kindergarten. Four year olds and other younger children attend kindergarten much less often. In 2004, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Yukon reported some enrolment of 4 year olds in kindergarten (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 183-4). In Quebec, the expansion of full day child care services led to a policy of maintaining but not increasing kindergarten services for 4 year olds (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 56). Kindergarten for four year olds is offered in two areas in Manitoba, by the Winnipeg school division and the Frontier school division. Alberta offers kindergarten to children with disabilities who

are aged 2.5 years or more (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 114). Policies of inclusion in education for children of all ages with special needs and the common policy of additional funding where modifications might be required means that “many or most” children with special needs attend kindergarten (Doherty et al., 2003: 42).

### *Licensing and regulation*

Provincial and territorial governments are responsible for the regulations regarding of child care and kindergarten services.

Regulated child care in Canada is primarily governed by child care legislation and regulations in each province and territory. This legislation provides for licensing, monitoring and enforcement. The regulations set out the standards and regulations for the operation of these group programs, including maximum child: staff ratios, group sizes, minimum staff qualification requirements and guidelines for parental involvement.

Staff ratios in day care centres provide an example of the diversity of requirements: staff to child ratios in Quebec are set at 1:8 for one year old children, but in Manitoba and Alberta 1:4 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 193). Most ratios for three year olds were 1:8. The maximum size of a group of one year old children in a day care centre ranges from 6 to 15 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 194). In Quebec the maximum is not specified, in Manitoba and Alberta eight children are permitted. Groups of three year olds can consist of between 14 and 25 children, depending on the jurisdiction. Regulation of on-reserve child care is conducted by some provincial governments, but not all (Friendly and Beach, 2005: xiii).

Informal or unregulated child care provided in a child’s own home or a caregiver’s home is used extensively in Canada. Each province and territory allows for a number of children to be cared for in environments which do not have to meet regulatory requirements and which are not inspected (Cool, 2004: 2). As well as informal care provided by relatives and friends, this includes in home care. The number of children who can be cared for in such an environment without meeting regulatory requirements ranges from 2 to 8 (Friendly and Beach, 2005: 196). In some jurisdictions the group sizes includes the provider’s own children and in others they do not.

In general, education legislation and regulations require that kindergarten students engage in a curriculum as well as establishing health and safety, staff qualifications, governance and inspection requirements (Doherty et al., 2003: 47). In comparison to child care regulation, kindergarten requirements are fairly consistent across the provinces and territories.

### *Staff training*

In every province and territory, kindergarten teachers must have a B.Ed and/or a teacher’s certificate or diploma. Although some provinces require an elementary specialization, only Quebec requires teachers to specialize in early childhood development.

There are two broad categories of staff in Canadian child care centres: the centre director and the full-time teaching staff. Training requirements vary considerably across provinces. In the case of full-time teaching staff:

- Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta require at least a percentage of staff in each group must have at least the equivalent of a two-year ECE diploma;
- PEI, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and British Columbia require that at least a percentage of staff in each group must have at least a diploma, meaning at least a one-year diploma.

A 1998 survey of staff in day care centres found that the extent of staff qualifications varied widely (Doherty et al., 2000a: 37). For example, in Quebec a third of staff had trained in a three year college course and another fifth had at least a bachelor degree. In Manitoba, a quarter of staff had studied for two years at college and another quarter had bachelor degrees. In Alberta, just over a quarter of staff had two years of college training and another fifth one year of training at a college. In Alberta, more than a third of staff had no post-school qualifications. Staff in not-for-profit centres reported higher levels of training than those working in for-profit centres (Doherty et al., 2000a: 38).

In 1998-99, 31 per cent of staff working for Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve had training in early childhood education and a further 14 per cent had other tertiary qualifications (Health Canada, 2000: 21). While early childhood education training opportunities were commonly available to staff in urban areas, training was available to less than half of those in remote or Inuit sites.

There are shortages of trained staff in every jurisdiction in Canada. This has forced provincial/territorial governments to grant exemptions to individual programs so that they can continue to operate without trained staff. All provinces/territories are attempting to develop initiatives to deal with these shortages. Increased funding is not one of the options currently being contemplated.

#### *Employment conditions*

Staff in child care centres have low wages compared to kindergarten staff, as well as compared to women working in other industries and other female workers with similar levels of qualification (Cleveland and Hyatt, 2002: 578).

In 2000, the average income of child care workers was \$20,600 in comparison to the workforce average of \$34,000 (Stafford, 2001). Staff in kindergarten settings were remunerated at a considerably higher rate than those child care settings; as in other areas of ECEC in Canada, there was substantial variation between jurisdictions. Kindergarten workers were paid as teachers and averaged an income of \$28,000 to \$50,000 in 2001, depending on the province or territory in which they worked (Doherty et al., 2003: 60). In contrast, annual salaries for child care staff ranged from \$12,551 to \$29,670. The 1998 survey of working conditions in child care centres across Canada found that average wages in a number of jurisdictions placed child care workers very close to the poverty line (Doherty et al., 2000a: 76-7). Staff working for Aboriginal Head Start in 1998-99 earned an average of \$13 per hour (Health Canada,

2000: 21). These staff were employed for an average of 35 hours per week but usually only for 44 weeks per year.

Employment benefits which are typical among kindergarten staff are less common among child care workers. In 2000, only 74 per cent of child care workers could take paid sick days and only 24 per cent could accumulate sick leave; these benefits were nearly universally available to kindergarten staff (Doherty et al., 2003: 60).

### **Data sources**

Canadian ECEC data collection has been incomplete and inconsistent (Cleveland et al., 2003: 5). Reviewing the state of Canadian data on ECEC, Cleveland et al. (2003: x) remarked that:

Although there have been some one-time-only studies of ECEC use patterns and surveys of some aspects of child care, there is no permanent, regular source of comprehensive information about the range of ECEC programs either on the demand side (data collected about parents) or the supply side (data collected about facilities).

The following data sets provide some information about Canadian ECEC. More detail on the range of data available is provided by Cleveland et al. (2003: 17-30) and Kohen et al. (2006) which also list older sources of data and data which do not focus on ECEC or children but which nonetheless act as resources in this area.

*Aboriginal Children's Survey*, was conducted by Statistics Canada, in late 2006. This was the first wave of what was planned to be a longitudinal study run every five years. 17,000 children under the age of six participated. Data collected include kindergarten attendance and child care use, type, preferences and costs. The first wave of data will be available in 2008. For more information see: <http://www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5108&lang=en&db=IMDB&dbg=f&adm=8&dis=2>

*Aboriginal Head Start Evaluation*, Health Canada has conducted both an administrative/process evaluation and an outcomes/impact evaluation of Aboriginal Head Start. The first part of the former took place in 1999. The latter was to run from 2003-2005. The first process evaluation report, *Children Making a Community Whole: A Review of Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities*, was published in 2000 (Health Canada, 2000). Two impact evaluation reports have been published (Health Canada, 2001 and 2002). More information about the evaluations can be found at:

[http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/programs-mes/ahs\\_evaluation\\_e.html#ANPE](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/programs-mes/ahs_evaluation_e.html#ANPE)  
[accessed 7 December 2007].

*Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada* is a compilation of data which the Childcare Resource and Research Unit has collated approximately every three years since 1992, the most recent being from 2004. Detailed information is provided on the governance and regulation of kindergarten and child care services in each province and territory, as well as funding, enrolments and a short policy history. Comparisons between the jurisdictions and across time are also made. The 2004 reports are available at <http://www.childcarecanada.org/ECEC2004/index.html>

*National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth*, from Statistics Canada, is collected every two years. It started in 1994 with sample is of 22,831 children aged 0-11 and their parents. It provides data on children and their families and the services they use, including ECEC. However, it does not collect data on quality or cost. Since the youngest children in the sample reached primary school by 2000, the later waves of the survey do not contain data on preschool aged children. <http://www.statcan.ca/cgi-bin/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4450&lang=en&db=IMDB&dbg=f&adm=8&dis=2>

*Quebec Longitudinal Study of Child Development (l'Étude longitudinale du développement des enfants du Québec) (ÉLDEQ)*, Santé Québec, l'institut de la statistique du Québec/University of Montreal, contains two phases between 1998 and 2002 and then 2003 and 2011. Intended to act as an extension of the National Longitudinal Study of Children and Youth, the first phase sample included 2000 Quebec families with a child aged less than 5 years who were surveyed twice, 17 months apart. Data topics included child behaviour and temperament and sociodemographic characteristics as well as a number of questions from the NLSCY. More information can be found from [http://www.jesuisjeserai.stat.gouv.qc.ca/etude\\_an.htm](http://www.jesuisjeserai.stat.gouv.qc.ca/etude_an.htm)

*Survey of Institutions Providing Early Childhood Training Programs*, by Statistics Canada, was conducted in 1997 and provides data on the characteristics of training programs, the staff who taught them and their students (Cleveland et al., 2003).

*Understanding the Early Years* from Human Resources Development Canada. Piloted from 1999 to 2001, Understanding the Early Years was made a national program in 2005. The first five projects were completed in 2005 and the next seven were due for completion in 2007. Twenty-one communities were funded in 2005, with a view to funding 100 communities by 2008. Data is compiled from a number of sources regarding children's development, family life, community services, and local socio-economic conditions. Mapping of service locations in relation to community demographics are provided with the view to aiding communities to use quality local research to assess and address the needs of children. For more information and the first reports, go to [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/sd/300\\_UEYInfo.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/sd/300_UEYInfo.shtml)

*You Bet I Care!*, University of Guelph, was collected in 1998-99. Data from full-day care centres on wages, conditions and fees was collected in all provinces and one territory. More detailed data was collected from a different sample of full-day care centres and from family day care providers in six provinces and one territory. Four reports are available from <http://www.uoguelph.ca/cfw/resources/index.htm> (Doherty et al., 2000a; Doherty et al., 2000b, Doherty et al., 2001; Goelman et al., 2000). See Doherty and Friendly (2002), *Making the Best Use of the You Bet I Care! Data Sets*, for more information.

**Timeline – Federal government of Canada initiatives**

1993	New federal government of Canada elected, Liberal Party of Canada, under Jean Chrétien
1995	First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative and Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve launched Canada Assistance Plan cancelled. Replaced by Canada Health and Social Transfer – no longer any dedicated federal funding for child care
1997	National Children’s Agenda developed between federal and provincial/territorial governments. It set four goals for children: good health; basic needs; physical, social and educational development; and social interaction and understanding of citizenship
1998	National Child Benefit introduced
2000	Early Childhood Development Agreement between provincial, territorial and federal governments (except Quebec)
2003	Federal, provincial and territorial Governments sign the Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care (MFA) (except Quebec) New prime minister, Liberal Party of Canada, Paul Martin
2004	QUAD principals (quality, universal inclusiveness, accessibility and developmental) announced with intention of forming a national system of early learning and child care
2005	Bilateral agreements between the federal government and each of the provinces and territories signed. 5 years funding was to be supplied to implement the QUAD principles.
2006	New federal government elected: Conservative Party of Canada, headed by Stephen Harper Federal government announces that all bilateral 5-year funding agreements terminated with one year’s notice. Funding would be instead directed to what was later known as the misnamed Universal Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Spaces Initiative.
2007	\$250 million allocated by federal government to provinces/territories for space expansion.

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## 2.4 New Zealand

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Population (2007) <sup>a</sup>	4,228,000		
Population of children under compulsory school age (2007) <sup>a</sup>	292,000		
Compulsory school age <sup>b</sup>	6, but children are allowed to enrol from 5 onwards and most do; thus the number above reflects children under 5.		
ECEC services measures of demand (2005) <sup>c</sup>	92% of ECEC services had adequate capacity. More than 6 month waiting times for 1-2 yr olds in 14% of places, for 3-4 yr olds 16%.		
ECEC participation rates <sup>d</sup>	Age <1 – 16% Age 1 – 44% Age 2 – 65% Age 3 – 97% Age 4 – 103%		
Fertility rate <sup>e</sup>	2.05		
GDP per capita (2006) <sup>f</sup>	US\$26,200		
Child poverty rate <sup>g</sup>	16.3% (children living in households below 50% of the national median income)		
Labour force participation rates	Labour force participation rate	Unemployment	Part time employment as % of employment
Males aged 15-64 (2006) <sup>h</sup>	85.1%	3.6%	10.1%
Females aged 15-64 (2006) <sup>h</sup>	71.4%	4.1%	34.5%
Mothers of children under compulsory school age (2001) <sup>i</sup>	Under 3 years old 43.2% 3-5 years old 58.2%		56.0%  52.2%
Family policy			
Maternity leave <sup>j</sup>	Up to 10 days before birth, 14 weeks paid after birth, 12 months unpaid. Mothers can transfer part or all of leave to their partner.		
Paternity leave <sup>j</sup>	1-2 weeks unpaid. Fathers can share in both the paid and unpaid leave of mothers.		
Parental leave <sup>j</sup>	Employees are entitled to 5 days sick leave each year, which can be taken if a dependant child is sick or injured and needs care.		
Family allowances <sup>k</sup>	In-work tax credit pays up to \$60 per week for families with three children. Couple families must work 30 hours per week, sole parents 20. Family tax credit from \$2- \$734 per week depending on family income and number of children. Parental tax credit up to \$150 per week over 8 weeks to families with a newborn.		

Income support for parents <sup>k</sup>	Domestic purposes benefit for <b>sole parent</b> ; must participate in employment planning meetings. Unemployment benefit for <b>couples</b> ; must look for part time work if youngest child is aged 6 or above or go to planning meetings if child is aged under 6.
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Notes: (a) Statistics NZ, 2007. (b) Education Act 1989, s20 part III. (c) Ministry of Education, 2006b: 15 (d) Education Counts, n.d (e) Statistics NZ, 2006b. (f) CIA, 2007. (g) UNICEF, 2005:4. (h) OECD, 2007a: 246. (i) OECD, 2004a: 77. (j) Department of Labour, 2006. (k) Inland Revenue, 2007.

## Policy Development

There has been significant policy development in early childhood education and care (ECEC) in New Zealand over the past ten years, beginning with a bicultural curriculum statement and including a ten-year strategic plan 'Pathways to the future'. From these policies various initiatives have spawned aimed at improving access for children in isolated areas, increasing the amount of qualified teachers, introducing 20 hours of free care for 3-4 year old children, and reducing child to teacher ratios.

New Zealand ECEC policies have been co-located within the auspices of the Department of Education since 1986 (Mitchell, 2005: 178-9). ECEC services in New Zealand are clustered as teacher-led or parent/*whānau*<sup>13</sup>-led services, together they are known as early childhood education (ECE) (Team Up, 2007). Early childhood educators lead the services offered in education and care centres, kindergartens and home-based education. In parent/*whānau*-lead services parents and *whānau* have high levels of involvement in providing ECEC to children. These services, which include playcentres and *Te Kōhanga Reo*, are not required to employ ECEC teachers (Education Counts, n.d).

In 1996 the Ministry of Education released *Te Whāriki*, notable for being both the first national and the first bicultural curriculum statement for the early childhood sector. *Te Whāriki* was a non-compulsory policy framework for children's learning, which emphasises partnerships between parents and teachers. As well as the English-language component for general services, it contained a curriculum specifically for Māori services. The curriculum goals focused on child development, wellbeing and empowerment. *Te Whāriki* was developed following lobbying from the early childhood sector for a common curriculum for all services (NZ Ministry of Education, Hereafter MOE, 1996a).

The late 1990s in New Zealand were characterised as "tempering" the ECEC policy approach that the National Party Government had taken in the early 1990s. In the earlier half of the decade, the conservative, neo-liberal government had withdrawn from its close involvement in ECEC administration and promoted a market approach to the sector (Mitchell, 2005: 180,183). Funding levels were almost frozen for the first half of the decade and as a result group sizes grew and staff to child ratios worsened. By the late 1990s, however, funding was increased and additional funding was provided to promote higher qualifications among staff. However, throughout the

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13 Whānau is a Māori word meaning extended family

decade, the National Party Government played a limited if any role in the planning of ECEC services (Mitchell, 2005: 183).

In November 1999 there was a change in government from the National Party to the Labour-Alliance Coalition. The new government signalled an intention for greater government involvement and support for ECEC services (Mitchell, 2005: 188). As one of its first actions, the new government distributed to early childhood services *The Quality Journey/ He Haerenga Whai Hua*, a resource to guide early childhood services in developing quality improvement systems and undertaking reviews.

The coalition government then appointed a working party of 31 representatives across the early childhood sector to develop a strategic plan recommended in the *Future Directions Report* (Early Childhood Education Project, 2000: 67). The ten-year plan called *Pathways to the Future/ Ngä Huarahi Arataki* was released in 2002. Its main goals were to increase participation in early childhood services, improve quality, promote collaborative relationships and build a sector that is responsive to the needs of Mäori and Pasifika peoples. To achieve these goals, the plan suggested reviewing regulations and funding, undertaking research and providing for greater sector involvement in policy development (Mitchell, 2005: 188). In the plan, the government committed to greater government involvement, smaller child to teacher ratios, increased numbers of qualified teachers, pay parity for kindergarten teachers compared with primary teachers, and grants to meet service providers' costs in supporting their staff in gaining qualifications (MOE, 2002).

In the following years, staff to child ratios were improved, funding was restructured to better meet the costs for services and in 2004 funding was raised to 79 per cent above 1999 levels, schools were required to provide for ECEC services and greater support was offered to community sector services (Mitchell, 2005; MOE, 2006a).

A policy to provide 20 hours of free early childhood education for all 3 and 4 year old children began on 1 July 2007. This extends to 5 year olds with special education needs who may require assistance with transition to primary school. The rationale behind 20 free hours per week was based on research that children benefit from ECEC only if it is intensive. The policy applies to teacher led ECEC services and *Te Köhanga Reo* (Mäori immersion services).

On 19 October 2007 the Education Minister announced the first stage of the implementation of the early childhood teacher qualification targets stated in *Pathways to the Future*. In order to meet licensing requirements, centres will be required to have 50% of their early childhood teachers holding a recognised qualification leading to teacher registration. The plan was for all early childhood teachers to be qualified by 2012 (MOE, 2006a).

The Ministry is currently investigating a mandated curriculum. This arose from a shift in government focus, which places learning rather than care at the centre of practice (MOE, 2007a). During February and March 2007 consultation meetings were held with representatives from ECEC organisations and associations and Ministry ECEC coordinators. It is proposed that the mandatory curriculum framework consist of the principles and strands of *Te Whäriki*. The principles include empowerment, holistic development, family, community and relationships, while the strands include well

being, belonging, contribution and communication. The proposed mandatory curriculum will apply to all ECEC services and certified playgroups.

## **ECEC Provision and Administration**

### *Auspices*

New Zealand is a unitary state rather than a federation. The agencies that assist the government to frame and implement policy are known as the state sector (Te Ara, 2007). This includes the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development and the Education Review Office, which are the main departments involved in early education and care in New Zealand (Meade and Podmore, 2002).

The Ministry of Education is responsible for policy, chartering, licensing, regulation, funding, training and curriculum matters (OECD, 2004b). The Ministry of Social Development provides advice on child policy, coordinates policy across government sectors such as health, education, care and protection and implements and evaluates the working for families package, which includes family tax credits (Ministry of Social Development, 2007). The Education Review Office (ERO) is separate from the Ministry of Education. It evaluates the education and care of students in schools and early childhood services, and it undertakes a review of individual centres every three years to investigate how well the DOPs are being implemented (Education Review Office, 2007).

### *Key providers*

New Zealand has a wide range of early childhood education and care services. They fall into two types, teacher led and parent led. Teacher led services include education and care services, kindergartens, homecare and correspondence school, while parent led services include playcentres, *te kōhanga reo* and licence exempt playgroups (Teach NZ, 2007). State funding is generally provided only if the service is licensed and has a charter setting out educational policies. Both teacher and parent led services can be licensed or chartered. Most services were licensed in 2006 (MOE, 2007d: 20).

*Education and care services* make up about half of all licensed ECEC services in New Zealand (see below). They offer part, all day or flexible services, or casual services (Team Up, 2007). They may accept children from birth to school age and 50 percent of regulated staff must be registered teachers. Education and care services include church, workplace and childcare centres. They may be privately owned for profit, including corporate, or non-profit, community-based (Mitchell, 2002). Over the last 15 years, ownership has shifted significantly towards the private sector. While in 1992, 48 per cent of education and care services were private for-profit, by July 2006 that proportion had risen to 57.5 per cent (Mitchell and Brooking, 2007).

*Kindergartens* are run by committees of parents and community members that report to local Kindergarten Associations. All teachers are registered with a Diploma in Teaching or similar qualification. Kindergartens generally offer services for children aged 2 ½ – 5 years, but some may accept children that are under two years of age. Children attend either morning or afternoon sessions 3 – 5 days per week.

*Home-based care groups* consist of a carer who is supported by a qualified coordinator who visits regularly to check on the children's learning progress. Home-based carers provide full time, part time flexible or emergency education and care for small groups of children.

At *Playcentres* and *Te Kōhanga Reo* are both facilitated parents and *whānau* are trained so that they are the educators who implement the educational program (Education Counts, n.d). At *Te Kōhanga Reo* children participate in "total immersion" in Māori language, culture and values.

**Table 2.3: Number of Early Childhood Education Services by Type of Service, July 2006**

Licensed		Licence Exempt	
Education and care centres	1,842	Playgroups	667
Kindergartens	619	Pacific Islands EC groups	41
Home based care groups	486	Ngā Puna Kohungahunga	93
Playcentres	474	Playcentres	22
Te Kōhanga Reo	202	Licence exempt Te Kōhanga Reo	8
Correspondence School	1		
Casual education and care	41		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3,665</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>831</b>

Adapted from MOE, 2007d: 20

The for-profit sector constitutes a large portion of the ECEC service delivery in New Zealand. In 2006, 1,195 licensed services were private and 2,470 were managed by community or public organisations (see Table 2.3 below). Among education and care centres, over the last 15 years ownership has shifted significantly towards the private sector. While in 1992, 48 per cent of education and care services were private for-profit, by July 2006 that proportion had risen to 57.5 per cent (Mitchell and Brooking, 2007).

**Table 2.4: Number of all Licensed Early Childhood Education Services by Form of Ownership, July 2006**

Community Based		Private	
Incorporated Society	1,533	Sole Trader	234
Charitable Trust	778	Company	687
Statutory Trust	36	Partnership	222
Community Trust	27	Private Trust	50
Government Department	3	State Owned Enterprise	1
Health Board	20	State: Not Integrated	1
Local Authority	16		
Public Education Institution	57		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2,470</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1,195</b>

Adapted from MOE, 2007d: 21

### *Funding Mechanisms*

According to a report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Education at a Glance*, in 2004 New Zealand public and private spending on pre-primary education for children 3 years and older was 0.3% of its Gross Domestic Product (OECD, 2007b: 206). The OECD average was 0.5 per cent. The NZ government subsequently announced substantial increases in funding to ECEC. The government anticipates that funding levels in 2008-09 will have increased by 140 per cent on 1999-2000 levels (Mallard, 2005).

The Ministry of Education has a variety of funding mechanisms in place. ECEC services usually have to be licensed and chartered to be eligible for funding. As part of the implementation of *Pathways to the Future*, since 2005 funding is linked to major cost drivers faced by early childhood centres such as employing qualified teachers, implementing 20 hours of free care for 3-4 year old children and bringing license exempt playgroups into the main funding system. The Ministry's funding streams are: the ECEC funding subsidy, equity funding, annual top-up for isolated services, establishment funding for new centres, discretionary grants, various grants supporting teacher qualification, special education supports, funding for licence-exempt services, and the childcare subsidy.

The funding rate paid by the government to cover the 20 hours of free care ranges from \$3.47 to \$10.89 per child per hour, according to the type of service and the number of registered teachers. The highest amount is reserved for all day teacher led services with 100% registered teachers (MOE, 2007e). Centres may ask parents to pay optional fees for items that are not considered to be necessities, such as food (Free ECE Sector Advisory Group, 2006). Play centres (parent led) are not included, as teacher led services charge higher fees due to teacher registration requirements.

The Early Childhood Council (ECC), the largest representative body of independent childhood centres in NZ, has countered that the government's funding rate often does not cover costs. Services charge rates of up to \$15 per child per hour (Early Childhood Council, 2005: 4). A survey that was sent by the ECC to 598 ECEC providers found that 45% of providers who would opt in to free ECEC stated that they would ask parents to pay optional charges, 31% would increase fees for 0-2 year olds and/or five year olds, and 8% would cut back on meals, trips and teaching resources (Early Childhood Council, 2007).

The Ministry of Education reported that 68 per cent of eligible services intended to offer free ECEC and free ECEC enrolments as a proportion of 3-4 year old enrolments was 75% (MOE, 2007b).

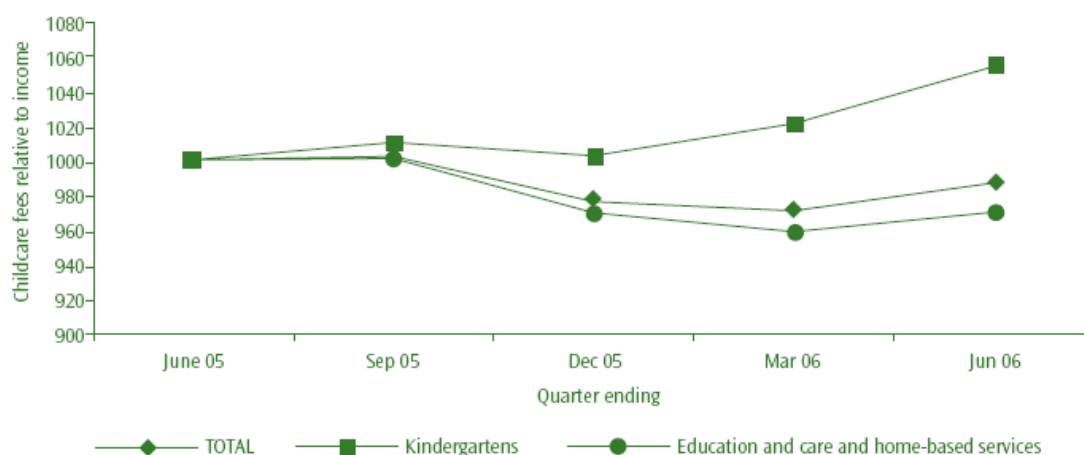
### *Affordability*

New Zealand promotes affordable ECEC through fee subsidies, operational funding and the provision of universal access to older children (Purcal and Fisher, 2006:51). As noted above, from July 2007 all three and four year old children are eligible for 20 hours per week of free ECEC. In addition to this, the 2004 budget introduced a *childcare subsidy* of \$1.31 - \$3.40 per child per hour funded by the Ministry of Social Development (Inland Revenue, 2007). The subsidy was to be targeted according to income and paid to ECEC providers so that they could reduce the cost to families. All

families were entitled to nine hours per week and those in employment or education could claim up to 50 hours per week (MOE, 2004a). The child-care subsidy was only to be available only for the hours not covered by free ECEC (Ministry of Social Development, 2007).

Figure 2.4 shows that fees for early childhood education and care services fell slightly relative to income from mid-2005 to mid-2006. Taking into account the consumer price index, kindergarten fees rose by nearly 6 per cent, whereas the cost of education and care centres and home based care fell by 2.6 per cent (Ministry of Education, 2006b: 16).

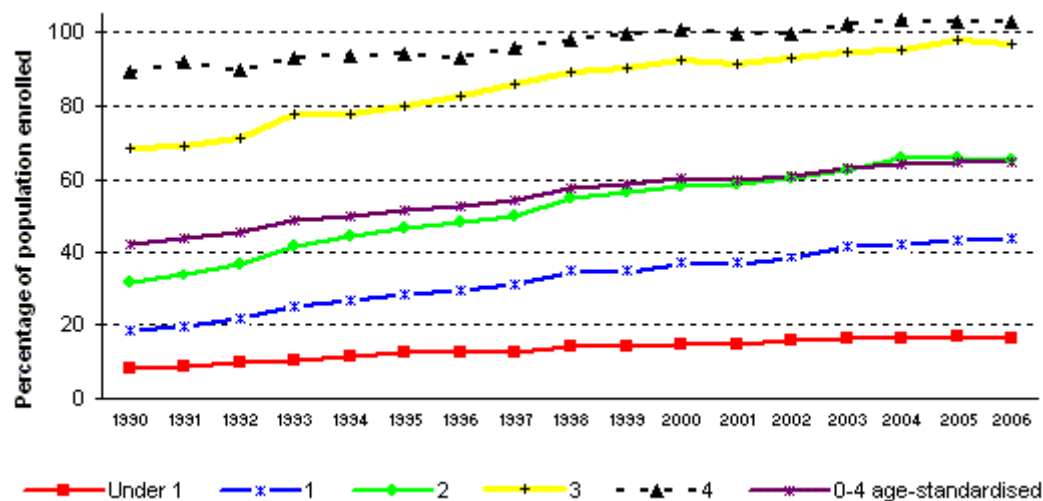
**Figure 2.8: Index of childcare fees relative to average income by quarter (June 2005 to June 2006)**



Source: Ministry of Education, 2006b: 16.

### Access

Between 1990 and 2006, enrolments in early childhood services increased by 51 per cent, from 43 to 65 per cent of the child population (see Figure 2.5) (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2007c). Increases were highest among the under three year olds, for whom enrolment rates doubled. In 2004, children attended kindergarten for an average of 12.5 hours, education and care centres for 19.5 hours and licensed *Te Kōhanga Reo* for 28.5 hours (Ministry of Education, 2007h: 8)

**Figure 2.9: Enrolment Rates by Age**

Source: New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007c. (Note: This data over-estimates enrolment rates in the population because it double- or triple-counts children who attend more than one service.)

There was also a marked increase in enrolments among Māori and Pacific Islands children. In 2003, Māori children made up 20 per cent of children in early childhood services, only slightly below their proportion within the general population (Murray and Galvin 2004). Likewise, the proportion of Pacific Islands children increased during the 1990s, but the proportion of Islander children in ECEC remained lower than in the population as a whole (MOE, 1998). Most of the overall increase in ECEC use was been absorbed by education and care centres, where enrolment numbers almost tripled since 1990 (MOE, 2007c).

Existing child care capacity in New Zealand does not match exactly with demand. As recently as 2002, only 77 per cent of child care places across the country were occupied (OECD 2004a). Use was higher in the Auckland area (82%) than in the rest of the country (74%). Much of the non-occupancy was due to very young children not using available child care: only 58 per cent of the spaces for under two year olds were occupied. While demand has risen, in 2006 most areas still had services with vacancies. At the same time, around 15 per cent of licensed services had waiting times of six months or longer (MOE 2006b). In a nationwide survey of child care services (Mitchell and Brooking 2007) both parents and managers asked for more places for under twos. Some parents also wanted more or different hours available for care, or different types of services to the ones they were using. These data suggest uneven provision and access to child care services rather than a shortfall in the overall number of places. Mitchell and Brooking (2007, p.137) argue that a reliance on market forces has contributed to these problems.

### *Licensing and regulation*

As mentioned above, ECEC services must be licensed and/or chartered to receive government funding (Statistics NZ, 2000). Licensing ensures minimum standards of quality are maintained, and a charter sets out the service's educational policies. Licensed and/or chartered services include education and care centres, playcentres,

kindergartens, home based care, casual education and care, and *kōhanga reo*. Licence exempt services include playgroups and playcentres (Team Up, 2007). Registered ECEC teachers must have at least a three year early childhood teaching qualification.

The Education (Early Childhood Centres) Regulations set minimum standards that must be complied with to ensure licensing. Individuals are licensed rather than organisations. Consultation with a nominated person from *Te Kōhanga Reo* Trust is required in cases affecting *kōhanga reo*.

Licensing requirements specify staff to child ratios. In October 2006 the government approved changes to ratios of adults to children in early childhood education services. From July 2009, ratios in all-day centres will be 1:5 for under 2½ year olds and 1:10 for the older age group. By July 2010 adult to child ratios will change from 1:15 to 1:14 for over 2½ year olds in sessional centres (MOE, 2006a). Improving ratios was one of the strategies for supporting quality mentioned in *Pathways to the Future* (MOE, 2002:3).

#### *Staff training*

The staff qualifications determined by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2007) range from certificates in ECEC to masters degrees. The benchmark qualification is a Diploma of Teaching (ECE), which is of 3 years duration full time, or an equivalent course that leads to registration with the New Zealand Teachers Council (TeachNZ, 2007). To become registered, teachers must hold an appropriate qualification, be of good character and fit to teach. All registered teachers have to obtain ongoing practice certification that ensures currency of knowledge.

By December 2007 teacher-led services will be required to have at least 50% qualified staff, with the aim of ensuring 100% qualified, registered staff to meet regulatory requirements by 2012 (TeachNZ, 2007). Across the country, the proportion of qualified staff in teacher-led services as a whole had reached 57 per cent in July 2006 (see Table 2.4 below). While the number of qualified teachers is increasing across the country, it is not evenly distributed. Auckland, the largest population centre in New Zealand and home to a large number of ECEC services, has a relatively low proportion of qualified staff (MOE, 2006b).

Parent run playcentres must have a minimum number of adults that hold playcentre qualifications at different levels, such as the Playcentre Education Diploma, in order to meet licensing requirements. As of July 2006, 75% of adults on duty in playcentres held a playcentre qualification, 20.5% held no qualification and 4.5% held another education related qualification (MOE, 2007d: 38).

**Table 2.5: Teaching Staff at Teacher Led Early Childhood Education Services, July 2006**

Service Type	Qualified <sup>a</sup>		Not Qualified	
	Staff number	Per cent	Staff number	Per cent
Kindergarten	1,715	96	79	4
Casual Education and Care	77	59	57	41
Education and Care	6,089	50	6,027	50
Home based Network	283	99	4	1
Correspondence School	22	100	0	0
Total	8,186	57	6,167	43

Source: Education Counts, 2007 table 7. Notes: (a) Qualified means the teacher holds a qualification that leads to registration with the NZ Teachers Council

### *Employment conditions*

Since there is no national collective agreement for the entire early childhood sector in New Zealand, employment conditions vary widely. Only kindergarten teachers are covered by a national agreement, negotiated between the union New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa and the Secretary of Education (2007-2009) Agreement available at [http://www.nzei.org.nz/ece\\_kindergarten/pay&conditions.htm](http://www.nzei.org.nz/ece_kindergarten/pay&conditions.htm)).

In 2000 the union New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa had negotiated with the government a staged process of achieving pay parity for kindergarten teachers with primary and secondary school teachers of equivalent qualifications and experience. This involved several pay increases, the last of which was delivered on 1 July 2007 (NZ Educational Institute, 2007).

The only other multi-employer agreement in this sector is the Consenting Parties Collective Employment Agreement, which was negotiated between the union and childcare employers. It covers only 192 of 1842 education and care centres, almost all community-based. Hence the large majority of education and care centres are not covered by a collective agreement. However, employers have to pay minimum rates stipulated in the Consenting Parties Agreement in order to receive higher government funding rates linked to registered teachers (Mitchell and Brooking 2007).

Most child care teachers work under individual employment agreements. Conditions are varied and, according to a recent survey (Mitchell and Brooking 2007), generally poorer in private education and care centres than in community-owned not-for-profit centres. This applies to measures such as workload, annual leave, non-contact time, staff meeting frequency and involvement in decisions about professional matters. It is therefore not surprising that teacher turnover is higher in private than in community-based centres (Mitchell and Brooking 2007).

A survey by the Ministry of Education of education and care services in 2003, found that nearly all workers earned between \$10 and \$20 per hour, with more than half earning \$15 or less (Harkess, 2004: 5).

## Timeline

1996	<i>Te Whàriki</i> , Ministry of Education bicultural early childhood curriculum.
1999	Change in government from the National Party to the Labour-Alliance Coalition.
2002	<i>Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki</i> , ten-year strategic plan for early childhood education. Early Childhood Equity Funding Scheme targeted at licensed, community based, not for profit services that are in low socio-economic communities, have a significant number of CALD children or children with special needs, are based on a language other than English or are in isolated areas. Agreement on pay parity for kindergarten teachers.
2004	Significant changes to the Ministry of Education's funding of early childhood education announced as the first instalment of delivering on <i>Pathways to the Future: Ngā Huarahi Arataki</i> .
2006	Government approves changes to ratios of adults to children. From 2010 the adult-child ratio for over 2½ year olds will change from 1:15 to 1:14.
2007	Proposed Mandated Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education, as the 2006 amendment to the Education Act allows for a national curriculum framework to be introduced and linked to regulatory requirements. Three and four year olds eligible for 20 hours of free early childhood education if attending teacher led services or some <i>kōhanga reo</i> . By December, centres will be required to have 50% of their teachers holding a recognised early childhood teaching qualification leading to teacher registration to meet their licensing requirements.

## Data sources

*Education Statistics of New Zealand for 2006*, New Zealand Ministry of Education. The education statistics of New Zealand has a section on Early Childhood Education, which covers the number of services and enrolments from 1997 – 2006. Ethnic identification, teaching staff and attendance patterns are also included. [http://www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/ece/ed\\_stats\\_nz/ed\\_stats\\_nz\\_06](http://www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/ece/ed_stats_nz/ed_stats_nz_06)

*First NZCER National Survey of Early Childhood Education Services*, Mitchell, L. and K. Brooking, New Zealand Council for Educational Research. The first NZCER (New Zealand Council for Educational Research) National Survey of Early Childhood Education Services covered opening hours and enrolment patterns, attendance patterns, parent views, choice and information, relationships between parents and ECEC services, consultation with parents and the community, funding, resources and surroundings, teacher employment and morale, ratios, volunteer work, assessment, evaluation and curriculum, reviews, professional development and relationships with schools. The research was undertaken in late 2003/ early 2004, with a sample of 531 ECEC services. [http://www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?products\\_id=1858](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?products_id=1858)

*Quality in Parent/ Whānau Led Services, and the Factors That Support It*, Wellington, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, *Te Kōhanga Reo* National Trust. The research questions that framed the project focused on the learning and development of adults and children and how they impact upon each other. The

interaction between learning within the centre and the home environment was also looked at. This was investigated through interviews during 2003-2004 with key informants, government officials and international researchers. Data was gathered from a sample of 28 parent led services including playcenters, playgroups, *kōhanga reo* and Pasifika centres.

[http://www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?cPath=207\\_231&products\\_id=683](http://www.nzcer.org.nz/default.php?cPath=207_231&products_id=683)

*Early Childhood Education (Licensed and/or Chartered Services): Time – Series*, Ministry of Education. The Early Childhood Education Time Series covers services, enrolments, age, gender, ethnicity, Māori, Pasifika, teaching staff, language and average weekly enrolled hours from 1990-2005.

*Childcare, Families and Work. The New Zealand Childcare Survey 1998: A Survey of Early Childhood Education and Care arrangements for Children*, Department of Labour Te Tari Mahi and National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women Wellington. The New Zealand Childcare Survey was conducted as a supplement to the Household Labour Force Survey from July to September 1998 to investigate arrangements for children under 14 years of age. A total of 3,809 families participated. <http://www.stats.govt.nz/datasets/social-themes/childcare.htm>

*Annual Early Childhood Education and Staff Return*, Ministry of Education, each year Education Counts collates data from all licensed and license-exempt ECEC services in New Zealand. Data includes enrolments, ethnicity, language and staff qualifications and is available for 2004 to 2006. For more information about the data collection, the survey and how the data is used see: [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data\\_collections/ece\\_staff\\_return](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/data_collections/ece_staff_return)

For the data published as tables go to:

[http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/ece/ece\\_staff\\_return/licensed\\_services\\_and\\_licence-exempt\\_groups](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/ece/ece_staff_return/licensed_services_and_licence-exempt_groups)

Evaluation of Promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) Participation Project, Ministry of Education,

Dixon et al. (2007) evaluated a project which aimed to promote ECEC services to parents, particularly those from Māori and Pacific Islander communities, low-income families and refugee families. The *Evaluation of Promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE) Participation Project*, was a qualitative study which drew on interviews with program workers, ECEC providers, parents and families, policy makers and other stakeholders.

*Parental decision making in relation to the use of Early Childhood Education services*, conducted by Robertson et al. (2007), incorporated in-depth interviews and a quantitative survey of 345 parents of 0-4 year olds. The study examined attitudes to ECEC services, elements of decision making, choice of service, sources of information, perception of quality and patterns of use of services.

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## 2.5 Sweden

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Population <sup>a</sup>	8.99 million		
Population of children under compulsory school age <sup>a</sup>	420 000		
Compulsory school age <sup>a</sup>	7		
Use of ECEC at different ages <sup>b</sup>	1-2 yrs: 45% 2-3 yrs: 86% 3-4 yrs: 91% 5-6 yrs: 96%		
Fertility rate <sup>a</sup>	1.71		
GDP per capita <sup>c</sup>	US\$32,200		
Child poverty rate <sup>d</sup>	4.2		
Labour force participation rates <sup>e</sup>	Labour force participation	Unemployment	Part-time employment as % employment
Male (2006)	82.6	7.0	8.4
Female (2006)	77.7	7.2	19.0
Mothers of children under compulsory school age (2005) <sup>f</sup>	0-2 years old 71.9% 3-5 years old 81.3%		
Family policy			
Maternity and paternity leave <sup>g</sup>	Parental benefit in connection with childbirth offers of 480 days, the first 390 at 80% of income. 60 days are reserved exclusively for each parent.		
Parental leave <sup>g</sup>	Temporary parental benefit of up to 120 days per year is available to help parents to take time off work to look after sick children.		
Family allowances <sup>h</sup>	Child Allowance of SEK 1050 per month is paid to families for each 0-16 yr old child, with a supplement for families with 2 or more children.		
Income support for parents <sup>h</sup>	Parents who are not eligible for social insurance and who have no other financial resources (a contributory scheme including parental benefit) can apply for social assistance, a publically funded support not limited to families.		

Sources: (a) OECD, 2006: 408; (b) OECD, 2006: 409; (c) CIA, 2007; (d) UNICEF, 2005; (e) OECD, 2007a: 247-8; (f) OECD, 2007b: Table 3.2; (g) Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2007: 1; (h) MHSA, 2007: 1; (h) Socialstyrelsen, n.d.

### Summary description of Swedish ECEC policy development

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services for children in Sweden combine education and care: a system sometimes described as ‘educare’ (Szebehely, 2005). ECEC policy aims to meet the dual objectives of supporting parents in employment or study and encouraging children’s development. Attendance at ECEC is mostly full-time rather than part-time and has been since the 1970s (Szebehely, 2005).

Swedish ECEC services include *förskola*, full-time pre-school for 1-6 year old children; *öppen förskola* or open pre-schools which also offer part time activities on a casual basis and *familjedaghem*, family day care for pre-school aged children (OECD, 2006: 408-9). Children aged 6 to 7 years attend *förskoleklass*, the pre-school class designed to aid in the transition to school which begins at age 7. Most children attend pre-school until they turn 6 when they go to the pre-school class.

In 1995 legislation was introduced which required all municipalities to ensure there were sufficient ECEC places for all 1-12 year olds children whose parents were either employed or studying as well as for all children in the municipality with special needs (Szebehely, 2005). At the time of the 1995 legislation, most Swedish municipalities were already providing spaces for these children; but the few which were not quickly adapted to provide spaces as required by the act (Korpi, 2007: 57). This entitlement was expanded further still in 2001 to provide 3 hours per day for children whose parents were unemployed and again in 2002 when children who had a parent at home caring for a younger sibling also became entitled to 3 hours per day. These new entitlements stand in contrast to the full-day services available to children of employed or studying parents. The legislation requires that a place be made available “without unreasonable delay” or a period of three months (Korpi, 2007: 57).

The integration of child care with education occurred in 1996 when the Ministry of Education assumed responsibility for child care which had formerly resided with the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs (Gunnarsson et al., 1999: 10). At the same time, in response to debates about reducing the compulsory school age to 6 years, a new school form was created by integrating pre-school for 6 year olds into the school system (Korpi, 2007: 63). The new form is known as the pre-school class. While the pre-school class for 6 year-old children is universally available, attendance in this year is not compulsory.

The school curriculum was modified to incorporate the pre-school class, creating a smooth transition from age 6 to compulsory schooling at age 7. A curriculum for children in pre-school aged 1-5 and for 6 year olds in pre-school class, *Lpfö 98*, was released in 1998, establishing the earliest years in ECEC services as the first in life-long learning (Gunnarsson, 1999: 11; Skolverket, 2007a: 32). The curriculum was not mandated for family day care and open pre-school, but did provide educational guidelines (Korpi, 2007: 64). The development of the Swedish pre-school curriculum was influenced by the principles and approaches of *Emilio Reggia*.

In the late 1990s, the high and variable cost of pre-school became an issue in public debate (Korpi, 2007: 68-9). In 2002, the Swedish government legislated for a maximum fee which could be voluntarily adopted by municipalities, a policy which all municipalities chose to implement (Korpi, 2007: 70). The next step towards addressing the cost of ECEC came in January 2003 when free universal pre-school of 15 hours per week for 4 and 5 year olds was introduced, regardless of the employment status of their parents (Korpi, 2007: 70).

Pre-school quality was the next issue to be addressed in Swedish ECEC policy. It was observed that while the number of children attending pre-school had increased, the levels of government funding were similar in 2001 to what they had been in 1990 (Szebehely, 2005). As a result, group sizes increased and staff numbers per child fell. In the early 2000s, staffing levels had not returned to the higher level they had been

prior to the 1990s economic crisis (Korpi, 2007: 71-2). The Swedish government made funding available in 2002 so that municipalities could increase staff numbers. In 2004, legislation was passed which guaranteed additional funding annually so that 6000 new staff could be employed, an increase of 10 per cent. Such an increase would enable staff to child ratios to again reach 1 to 5.

In 2006, the Moderate Coalition Party was elected to the Swedish Government. The new liberal, conservative government is currently undertaking family policy reform. In doing so, the government's stated aims are improved gender equity, greater recognition of the diversity of families and their needs, improved families' ability to combine employment with family life and "increas[ing] families' freedom of choice by reducing national political control" (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 2007b). In the Budget Bill for 2008, the government announced that it intends to introduce a four part reform which will include:

- a system of childcare vouchers,
- greater educational content in pre-school,
- a gender equity bonus which will endeavour to limit the effect of pay differentials on the shared use of parental leave, and
- child-raising allowances so that parents can remain longer at home with children aged 0 to 3 (Ministry of Finance, 2007).

### **ECEC provision and administration**

#### *Auspices*

Responsibility for ECEC policy, guidelines and funding lies with the central government (OECD, 2006: 409). From 1996 responsibility has been located within the Ministry for Education and Science, later renamed the Ministry for Education and Research (Gunnarsson, 1999: 10). Sweden's 290 municipalities are responsible for the provision of ECEC. The municipalities have responsibility for monitoring quality and ensuring adequate places (OECD, 2006: 409).

#### *Key providers*

The majority of ECEC services are publically owned and operated. In 2006, 83 per cent of children attended municipal public pre-schools (Skolverket, 2007c: 39). The National Agency for Education classes all pre-schools which are not managed by the municipality as 'private', which includes cooperatives created by parents or staff, other not for profit centres as well as for profit businesses. Of the children attending these other pre-schools in 2006, most attended cooperatives (7 per cent) or centres managed by companies (6 per cent). While the proportion of children attending public pre-schools remained steady from 2003 to 2006, the proportion attending for profit pre-schools rose slightly from 5 per cent in 2003. Similarly, the proportion going to parent cooperatives fell slightly. Privately operated centres were most common in large towns and suburban municipalities, and in 59 of the 290 municipalities in Sweden, there were no privately operated centres at all (Skolverket, 2007a: 22).

Among 6 year olds attending pre-school class, nearly all attended publicly run schools. Seven per cent attended not for profit or for profit schools (Skolverket, 2007a: 33). Privately-run pre-school classes operated on sub-contracts to the municipality. The proportion of children attending non-public schools varied between the municipalities from none at all to more than 20 per cent.

The proportion of children in family day care was higher in some areas than others. For example, 9 per cent of children living in rural municipalities went to family day care compared to 3 per cent in big cities (Skolverket, 2007a: 24). Ten per cent of children in municipalities with smaller populations attended family day care compared to 7 per cent in those with larger populations.

Parents with tertiary education (20 per cent) were more likely to send their children to private pre-schools than parents who had not completed high school (5 per cent) (Skolverket, 2007d). Children whose parents were both born outside Sweden or children of single parents were less likely to use private pre-school than other children.

### *Funding mechanisms*

In 2004, Swedish public investment on all ECEC was 1.9 per cent of GDP (OECD, 2006: 408). More recently, OECD (2007c:206), *Education at a Glance*, reported that Swedish public and private spending on pre-primary (children aged 3 or more) education was 0.5 per cent of GDP. This was exactly the OECD average.

Funding for Swedish ECEC services comes from three sources: central government grants to municipalities which are then directed to pre-schools and family day care homes; municipal funding to providers; and parental fees (Skolverket, 2007a: 30). Sweden does not provide fee relief directly to parents, but rather municipalities ensure low costs to parents are not high. As an incentive to encourage municipalities to introduce the maximum fee reforms, the central government initially provided grants to the municipalities to cover lost income (Purcal and Fisher, 2006: 51; Skolverket, 2007b: 26-7).

The parental contribution to ECEC doubled from 1990 to 2001 when it reached 19 per cent (Skolverket, 2007a: 30). However, after the introduction of the maximum fee in 2002, parental contributions fell to 11 per cent and by 2005 was 10 per cent<sup>14</sup>.

Municipal spending on pre-school, including central funding, in 2005 was SEK 37.6 billion, an increase of 9 per cent from 2004 (Skolverket, 2007a: 28-9). Expenditure on family day care homes was SEK 2.8 billion; expenditure fell steadily since at least 2001 associated with a fall in attendance (see section 3.4 below). Open pre-school expenditure was SEK 243 million. Spending on pre-school classes for 6 year olds was SEK 4 billion in 2005, equivalent to 3 per cent of education funding (Skolverket, 2007a: 35).

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14 Note that these figures include parental contributions to all ECEC, including leisure time centres for school-aged children.

The 2006 average municipal pre-school expenditure per enrolment was SEK 99,100 (Skolverket, 2007a: 29). However, this varied between municipalities, most spending between SEK 87,500-111,000. Expenditure per pupil was SEK 45,300; again varying between municipalities, with most spending between SEK 31,300 and 62,100.

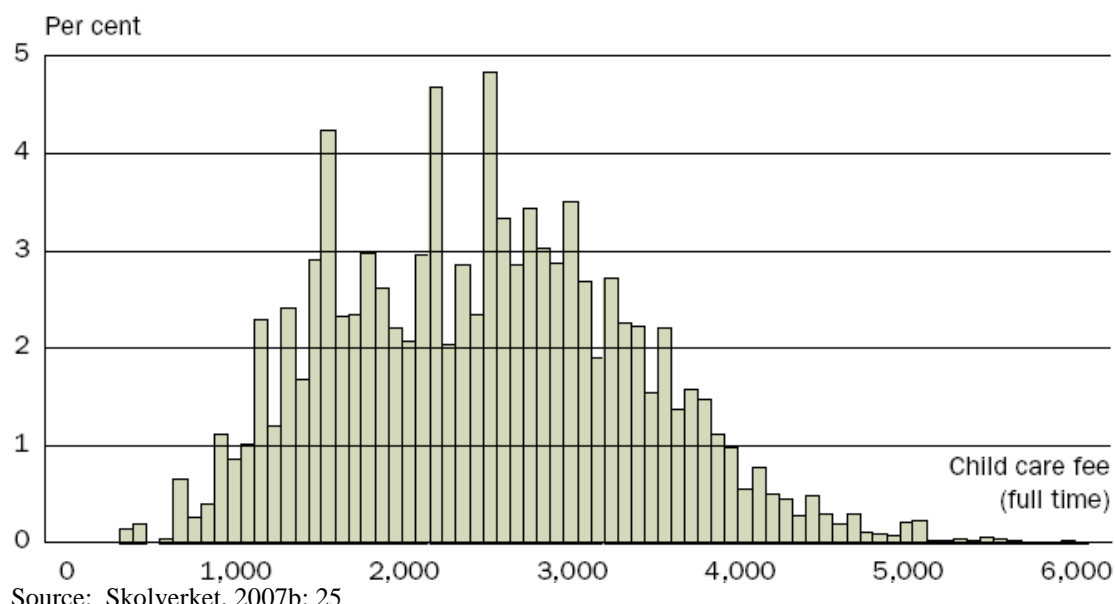
### *Affordability*

The maximum fee was introduced in most municipalities in 2002; and by the remaining two the following year (Skolverket, 2007b: 12).

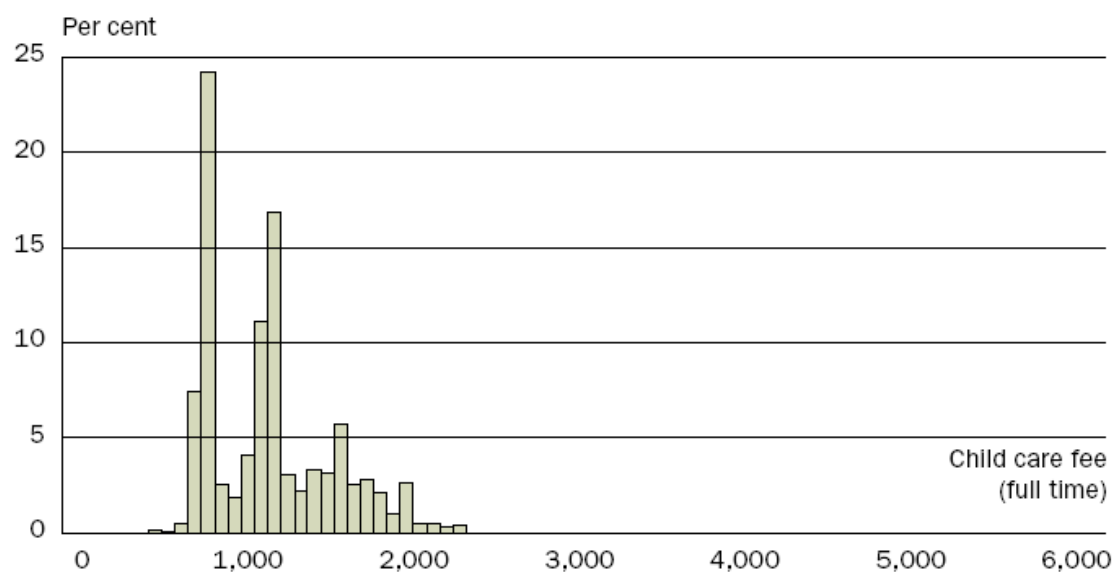
The maximum fee places an upper limit on the amount that municipalities can charge parents for ECEC services. Households with incomes of SEK42,000 per month pay no more than the maximum fee (Skolverket, 2007b: 12). Households with lower income pay at most a proportion of their income. So a family with one child attending ECEC pays either SEK 1,260 or 3 per cent of its gross income, whichever is lower. The fees for a second and third child in the family who are attending ECEC are lower and there are no fees beyond the fourth child.

The maximum fee legislation substantially reduced the cost of pre-school for many parents, the range of fees was considerably smaller. In 2001, there was considerable variation in the cost of child care, with fees for full time pre-school for 1-5 year olds and for leisure time centres for school age children, reaching up to SEK 6,000 per month, with most parents paying between SEK 1,500 and 3,500 (see Figure 2.6) (Skolverket, 2007b: 25-6). By 2003, there was much less variation, costs were mostly less than SEK 1,500 per month and no household paid more than SEK 2,280 (Figure 2.7).

**Figure 2.10: Fees in pre-school for 1-5 year olds and leisure-time centres for school age children, 2001**



**Figure 2.11: Fees in pre-school for 1-5 year olds and leisure-time centres for school age children, 2003**



Source: Skolverket, 2007b: 26

The very high levels of pre-school participation among children aged 1-5, 94 per cent in 2005, was interpreted by the National Agency for Education to mean that the cost of pre-school was less of a factor in parents' decisions not to send their children to pre-school than other factors, such as personal choice (Skolverket, 2007b: 21).

#### *Access to ECEC services*

In October 2005, 77 per cent of 1-5 year old children were enrolled in pre-school and 6 per cent in a family day care home (Skolverket, 2007a: 18). The proportion of children at pre-schools increased steadily for many years, slowing slightly in the 2000s; whereas family day care home attendance rates fell steadily from the late 1980s.

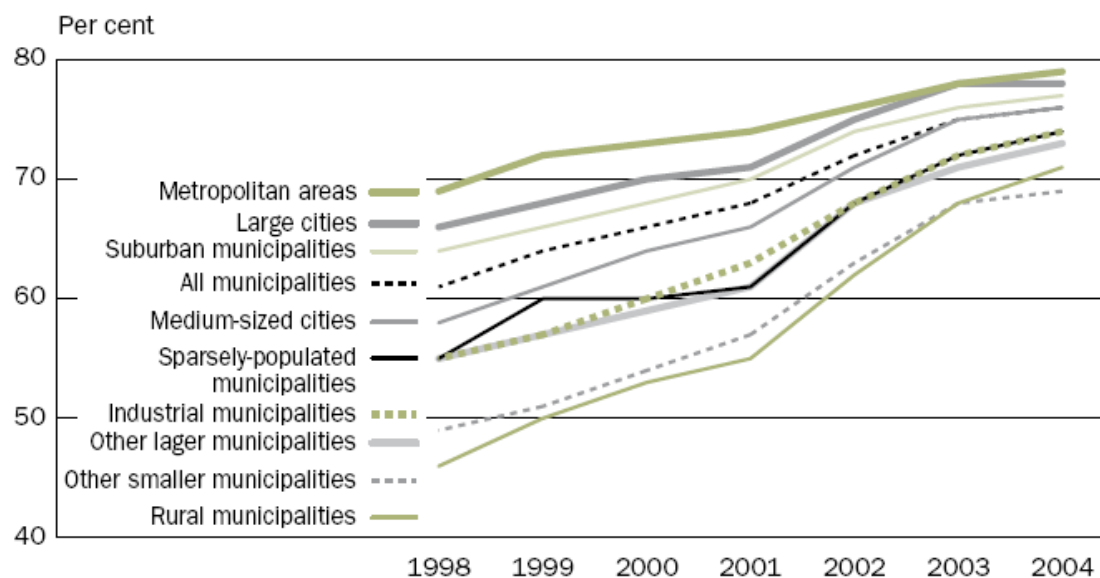
Very few children under the age of one year went to ECEC services; the National Agency for Education reported enrolments of just 30 of these children in Sweden in 2005 (Skolverket, 2007a: 19). However, between 1-3 years, the numbers were around 226,500, or 75.3 per cent of children in that age group. Between the ages of 4 and 5 years, over 180,800 or 96.4 per cent of children attended ECEC.

In 2005, 88,407 children, or 94.7 per cent of 6 year olds, attended the pre-school class (Skolverket, 2007a: 32). The pre-school class was offered to 6 year old children in 285 municipalities; children in the five other municipalities mostly attended the first compulsory year of school.

Enrolment rose in response to combination of policy changes: the maximum fee reforms and the extension of access to pre-school to children whose parents were unemployed or on parental leave (see Figure 2.8 below) (Skolverket, 2007a: 20). The largest increase, of 15,000 children, was in 2001 and 2002 when children whose parents were on leave caring for a young sibling became entitled to attend pre-school. In 2003, 2,500 additional children enrolled following the universal

entitlement to pre-school for 4 and 5 year olds. Such a small number of additional 4 and 5 year olds enrolled because attendance rates were already very high when the new policy was introduced (Skolverket, 2007b: 22).

**Figure 2.12: Proportion of children aged 1-5 enrolled in pre-school, 1998-2004.**



Source: Skolverket, 2007b: 18

In 2005, two per cent of families reported that they did not have access to a pre-school place for 1-5 year old children (see Table 2.5) (Skolverket, 2007b: 20). Among employed parents, 95 per cent said their children attended pre-school and only one per cent did not have a place. The highest level of demand was among unemployed parents, among whom 6 per cent sought a pre-school place. The lowest level of pre-school participation was among children whose parents were on parental leave for a younger sibling at 52 per cent. Levels of participation rose for all groups since 1999, especially for those on parental leave, but also among children of unemployed parents or parents with long-term illnesses.

**Table 2.6: Demand for pre-school places for 1-5 year olds, by parental occupation, 1999 and 2002.**

Main occupation	Employment/ studies	Unemployed	Parental leave	Long-term illness	All
<b>Year 2002</b>					
Have place	95	83	52	86	85
Do not have but want a place	1	6	3	3	2
<b>Year 1999</b>					
Have place	90	67	30	73	77
Do not have but want a place	1	10	10	7	4

Source: Skolverket, 2007b: 20

The National Agency for Education raised concerns about the quality of care provided to children of unemployed parents or parents on parental leave who had a 15 hour per

week entitlement. Skolverket (2007d) reported that group sizes swelled during the time of the day when these children attended pre-school, so that the same number of staff were required to care for a larger group of children. In addition, the Agency was concerned that in some municipalities, children were required to change pre-schools if their parent became unemployed or took parental leave, and then re-apply for pre-school again when their parent returned to employment. Both approaches to the “15 hours children” were counter to the intent of the legislation.

The average number of hours per week that 1-5 year old children of employed parents attended pre-school was 31 in 2005 (Skolverket, 2007b: 21). The number of hours children attended did not increase after the introduction of the maximum fee, despite the cost of care being decoupled from the hours that children attended (Skolverket, 2007d).

The majority of parents, 90 per cent, were satisfied with the form of care which their child used, this was more often the case if the child was attending pre-school than if they were in family day care or staying at home with the parent (Skolverket, 2007d). Since the ECEC reforms of 2001 and 2002, more parents who were at home with their children were satisfied with this arrangement, suggesting that this arrangement was more often due to personal choice, rather than because there was no ECEC place available for their child as had been the case in the past. Of those who were dissatisfied with the type of care their children used, if they preferred pre-school, 43 per cent said that there was no space available and 16 per cent said it was not possible for them to use pre-schools due (for example because it was not available during their work hours). Nine per cent said that cost was a factor. In contrast, of those parents who would have preferred to be at home with their children, three-quarters said that cost was stopping them.

Although the pre-school curriculum prescribes that children whose first language is not Swedish should be supported in the development of that first language, such instruction is rare (Skolverket, 2007a: 22-3). In 2006, only 14 per cent of the 56,800 children entitled to first language support received that support. This proportion is less than the 19.5 per cent who received first language support in 2000, and substantially less than the approximately 60 per cent who did so in the 1980s. At the time, most municipalities were not offering first language support to any children. Among 6 year old children attending the pre-school class, the first language of 14.5 per cent required first language support and just under half of these children received it (Skolverket, 2007a: 33).

Skolverket (2007d) has expressed concern that children with special needs have not always received the care for which they were entitled. The agency has exhorted municipalities to ensure that sufficient resources were allocated to provide ECEC services to children with special needs.

### *Licensing and regulation*

There is no system of licensing in Swedish ECEC. However, municipalities are responsible for monitoring the quality of pre-schools in accordance with standards established by the central government. The size and composition of groups, the condition of premises and staff numbers and training are all specified (Skolverket, 2007a: 15). However, no specific figures are provided, rather municipalities are

required to ensure that staff-ratios, for example, meet the needs of the local pre-schools, recognising that some areas might require high ratios than others (Skolverket, 2007d).

Municipalities could only fund privately operated pre-school if they met quality standards and their fee levels were not too high. Family day care homes were inspected by the municipality (Gunnarsson, 1999: 47).

Each year Skolverket reports on the state of pre-school throughout Sweden, making recommendations both to the central government and the municipalities on areas which should be improved, such as quality, accessibility and equity (see for example, Skolverket, 2007d, report in Swedish).

### *Staff training*

In 2006, ninety-five per cent of staff working in pre-schools had training in working with children (Skolverket, 2007a: 26). For 49 per cent of staff, this was tertiary pre-school teacher training and for 41 per cent it was childminder training. Among family day care staff, 70 per cent had some form of training for working with children, but this was less often tertiary teacher training. Levels of training were lower in non-government and private pre-schools, where 88 per cent of staff had some form of training and 43 per cent had tertiary training (Skolverket, 2007d: 14).

In the pre-school classes for 6 year olds, 84 per cent of staff held higher education teaching qualifications (Skolverket, 2007a: 35). Such qualifications were more common in public schools, where they were held by 86 per cent of staff, than in privately operated pre-school classes (74 per cent) or independent schools (65 per cent).

### *Employment conditions*

Nearly all staff in Swedish ECEC services in 2006 were women, only 3 per cent of those in pre-schools were men, and these were concentrated in positions as heads or supervisors, where they made up 20 per cent (Skolverket, 2007a: 26). Similarly in pre-school classes for 6 year olds, 94.5 per cent of staff were women (Skolverket, 2007a: 34).

Wages for ECEC workers are low in comparison to other workers (Gunnarsson, 1999: 48). In 2004, the median monthly salary for pre-school teachers was €2,106, less than the salary of a primary school teacher €2,523 (European Foundation, 2006: 14-15). Childminders received a lower income still, €1,814. Both salaries were less than the median income for Swedish women €2,242 and men €2,690.

In addition, as more children entered pre-schools during the 1990s without corresponding increases in funding levels increases, employment conditions deteriorated, leading to more difficult work conditions (Szebehely, 2005). Staff were working with larger numbers of children which created a more stressful work environment (Skolverket, 2007b: 24). However, after remaining at 5.4:1 from 2000 to 2004, the staff to child ratio dropped in 2005 to 5.2:1, the lowest level since 1994. The National Agency for Education speculated that this drop was a result of central funding to municipalities to increase staffing levels in 2005 (Skolverket, 2007a: 27).

The ratio in family day care homes also fell to 5.2:1. The decline in the staff to student ratio also raised concerns about the quality of pre-school services for children.

### Timeline

1994	Social Democratic Party elected to Swedish Government.
1995	Municipalities required to provide ECEC services to all children aged 0-12 who had special needs or whose parents were working or studying.
1996	Pre-schooling and school-aged care transferred from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Science. Legislation transferred from Social Services Act to the Education Act. The non-compulsory pre-school class for 6 year olds created as a new form in schools.
1997	
1998	First curriculum released for pre-school and the pre-school class, <i>Lpfö 98</i> .
1999	
2000	
2001	Children of unemployed parents become entitled to 15 hours per week at pre-school.
2002	Children whose parents are at home on leave caring for a younger sibling become entitled to 15 hours per week at pre-school. Maximum fee legislation set ECEC expenses at 3% of parental income. Additional funding made available for staff increases so as to improve staff to child ratios.
2003	Legislation passed to make pre-school free and available for all 4 and 5 year olds, without regard to the employment status of their parents.
2004	Skolverket report, <i>Pre-school in Transition</i> , a national evaluation of Swedish pre-schools released. Legislation for continuing increased pre-school funding so that staff levels could increase by 10 per cent.
2005	
2006	The liberal, conservative Moderate Coalition Party was elected to the Swedish Government.
2007	Family policy reform announced which would see child care vouchers and child-raising allowances introduced in 2008.

### Data sources

The National Agency for Education, Skolverket, collects administrative data on ECEC services from the municipalities as part of the national education system monitoring processes. Reports presenting the data have been published annually since 1992 and available on the agency website (<http://www.skolverket.se>, for English language publications go to: <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/355>). Prior to this, ECEC statistics were collected by Statistics Sweden, Statistiska Centralbyrån (<http://www.scb.se/>). These reports provide data on the number of children attending

ECEC services, the kinds of services they attend, the number of employees and their levels of training, expenditure and costs (Gunnarsson, 1999: 62).

National Agency for Education, Skolverket, Parents' Survey, has been conducted every three years since 1999. In 2005, 18,000 parents who had a child aged between 1 and 12 years completed a short survey. The survey results include marital status, number of children, parental activity (employment, study, leave etc), age of child, types of care used and number of hours, satisfaction with type of care, and reason for not using preferred type of care. Results from the 2005 survey, were published in a report in 2007 which is only available in Swedish.

Each year Skolverket presents a report on the state of Swedish pre-schools, *Skolverkets lägesbedömning*. This report details the numbers of children attending pre-school, funding levels, staff qualifications, child to staff ratios, etc. In doing so it makes recommendations to the central government and to the municipalities on how pre-school should be improved. The reports are only available in Swedish. For the 2007 report, see <http://www.skolverket.se/publikationer?id=1753>.

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## 2.6 United Kingdom

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Population (2006) <sup>a</sup>	60.6 million – 84 per cent lived in England, 8.5% in Scotland, 4.9% in Wales and 2.9% in Northern Ireland.		
Population of children under 6 years <sup>b</sup>	5 million		
Compulsory school age	First term after 5 <sup>th</sup> birthday		
Measures of demand (2002) <sup>c</sup>	One quarter of parents said they had needed but not been able to use formal child care in the previous year; close to 100 per cent of 3 and 4 year olds attend free pre-school places.		
ECEC participation rates <sup>b</sup>	Age 0-3, 26% Age 3-4 95% Age 4-5 100%		
Fertility rate <sup>b</sup>	1.7		
GDP per capita (2006) <sup>d</sup>	US\$ 31,800		
Child poverty rate (2005) <sup>e</sup>	15.4		
Labour force participation rates	Labour force participation	Unemployment	Part-time employment as % of employment
Male (2006) <sup>f</sup>	83.2	5.8	9.9
Female (2006) <sup>f</sup>	70.3	5.0	38.8
Mothers of children under compulsory school age (2005) <sup>g</sup>	0-2 years old 52.6% 3-5 years old 58.3%		
Family policy			
Maternity leave <sup>h</sup>	39 weeks paid maternity leave at 90% earnings for 6 weeks, then a fix rate for 33 weeks. Also 52 weeks of unpaid leave. Plan for 12 months paid maternity leave in 2010.		
Paternity leave <sup>i</sup>	2 weeks paid paternity leave.		
Parental leave	Unpaid parental leave		
Family allowances	Working Tax Credit including a child care component for people working 16 hours or more per week.		
Income support for parents	Lone parents are eligible for Income Support until their youngest children reaches 16 or leaves secondary school. No employment participation required except an annual work-focused meeting to discuss employment possibilities. From October 2008, eligibility will be reduced to parents with a youngest child aged less than 12 years; and to 7 years in 2009.		

Sources: (a) National Statistics, 2007; (b) OECD, 2006: 415; (c) NAO, 2004: 28; (d) CIA, 2007; (e) UNICEF, 2005; (f) OECD, 2007a: 247-8; (g) OECD, 2007b: Table 3.2; (h) Directgov, 2008a and 2008b, (i) Directgov, 2008c

**Summary description of early childhood education and care policy development**

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) policy in the United Kingdom has traditionally been the responsibility of each of its countries. Prior to devolution in 1999, the Secretaries of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were responsible for ECEC policy. After devolution, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Government continued hold and administer childcare and education policy (Wasoff and Hill, 2002:174). The UK Government administers English ECEC policy.

However, there is considerable consistency and Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh policy have been driven by and adapted central government policies. Sure Start, for example, operates in each of the four jurisdictions of the UK, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, but in each with a different design.

The forms of ECEC which are most common in the UK are known as: childminders, people who care for children in their own homes; Children's Centres, which provided integrated children's services including ECEC; day nurseries which offer ECEC to groups of children, often in the form of full day care; and early years education or pre-school, the educational services offered to children in the year or two prior to school.

Child care and the well-being of children have been central policy planks for the Labour Government since its election to office in 1997. In focusing on child care, Labour ventured into what had previously been seen as a private concern (Butt et al., 2007: 6).

Higher levels of employment among women and improved child outcomes in terms of development have been key policy drivers for ECEC development since 1997 in the UK. The latter has included a focus on reducing child poverty. This differs from those in most European countries which are more often driven by the twin aims of increasing women's employment and increasing gender equality. (Smith, 2007c: 10). ECEC policy has adopted twin strategies of child care for working parents and universal provision of early years education prior to school. These have been presented in terms of striving to ensure that "every child gets the best possible start in life", support for working parents especially mothers, and "choice" for families in how they balance their employment and family lives (Butt et al., 2007: 92).

The first section summarises the key policies in each country in the UK. The remainder of the document refers solely to England unless otherwise stated.

*England*

In 1998 the Green Paper, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge*, set out the National Childcare Strategy to improve quality, affordability and accessibility of child care (DfEE, 1998). It was followed shortly afterwards by Sure Start, also launched in 1998. Sure Start brought together children's services for education, child care, health and family support, in recognition that "the needs of families, particularly disadvantaged families, do not arise in tidy packages that single services can provide for" (NAO, 2006:4). Sure Start Local Programmes first began operating in 1999, when the first of 500 were opened in disadvantaged communities across England (NAO, 2006: 12).

The Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative started in 2001 with the aim of increasing child care availability for working parents in the poorest neighbourhoods (Smith, 2007a: 11). A target was set of 45,000 new child care places for children aged 0-4, ideally as full day care places which would operate alongside services for early education, health and family support, such as was being provided through Sure Start. This target was met by August 2004 and by 2005 three-quarters of the nursery places were located in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Smith, 2007b: 103). At their highest point there were 1,300 Neighbourhood Nurseries (NAO, 2006: 7).

Other smaller initiatives included 100 Early Excellence Centres, which combined early years education and full day care with adult education and community services; and a pilot program called Wrap Around Early Provision which offered education programs to 3 and 4 year olds at the core of child care to enable parental employment (NAO, 2006: 7; Smith, 2007a: 11).

In 2002, the Inter-departmental Childcare Review found firstly that there was a need for more child care places, especially in disadvantaged areas; secondly, that further investment in child care was needed in order to reach targets for lone parent employment and child poverty; that reform of funding and delivery mechanisms was needed; and thirdly that the opportunity to deliver educational programs as part of child care was being overlooked (DfES, 2002:6-7). In response, as well as creating more child care places, the Government announced that all the above programs, Sure Start, the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative, Early Excellence Centres and Wrap Around Early Provision, would be brought into a single program of Sure Start Children's Centres. By March 2006 around 800 Children's Centres provided services to 650,000 children (NAO, 2006: 12). This first phase of the project focused on establishing Children's Centres in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. These Centres include integrated early years education and care services as well as health facilities; support services for families, childminders, and children and parents with special needs; and employment and training advice (NAO, 2006: 14). 2,500 Centres were to be in place by March 2008 and a further 1,000 by 2010. The last group of Centres, which was to be outside the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, would probably not be required to provide the same broad range of services, in particular, education and care for young children, but rather information and advice.

In December 2004, the Treasury released *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare*. In it, the Treasury set out a vision which included the free child care for all 3 and 4 year olds which had already been introduced; starting with 15 hours per week for 38 weeks and aiming for 20 hours per week by 2010 (HM Treasury, 2004: 1). This was to be supplemented with other measures to reduce the cost of care, improve the skills of the early years workforce and improve the quality of care. The Strategy was driven by three principles, the importance of early years development for children and the need to ensure the most disadvantaged children benefited from early years education and care, a need to support mothers' employment and providing 'choices' to families balancing work and life (HM Treasury, 2004: 2). Elements of the Strategy regarding the responsibilities of local authorities to ensure sufficient child care, reduce inequalities and improve pre-school outcomes were implemented in the Childcare Act 2006 (Sure Start: Childcare Act 2006). The Act also provided a new quality framework for education and care for children in pre-school. It was the first Act of Parliament ever to

specifically focus on child care (Hill, 2008). Most of these provisions were to come into effect in 2008.

The Children's Centres are an example of UK efforts to bring the two strands of ECEC policy together in England, as is, the creation of the Department for Children, Schools and Families which is responsible for both education and care policy (Butt et al., 2007: 4).

Alongside specific education and care policy, The UK Government has developed a number of related strategies regarding well-being of children. Most notable of these was the child poverty target which evolved from a pledge by the Prime Minister in 1998 to eradicate child poverty within 20 years.

Other related developments included *Every Child Matters*, which was released in September 2003 (HM Government, 2003). The Green Paper proposed action to improve the health, safety, education and well-being of children. Following consultation on the Green Paper, the UK Government introduced the *Children Act 2004*, and published *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. The Act established an English Children's Commissioner, required local authorities to develop Children's and Young People's Plans and brought education, health and welfare services for children together under a director of children's services in each local authority (HM Government, 2004: 5; Smith, 2007c: 5).

### *Scotland*

Since devolution, when Scotland acquired the authority to enact legislation locally there has been high levels of activity in the ECEC policy area (Cohen, 2003:236-7). However, developments began in Scotland with a parallel publication to the UK 1998 Green Paper titled, *Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy in Scotland* (Secretary of State for Scotland, 1998). This document committed the Scottish Government to providing free pre-school education for every four year old, a promise extended to include three year olds the following year, in *Helping the Family in Scotland* (The Scottish Office, 1999). The Childcare Strategy provided a framework for the greater integration of pre-school and child care (Cohen, 2003: 242).

Following devolution, the new Scottish Executive brought responsibility for child care and education together within the one department, the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED), and created the Children and Young People's Group within the Department. With a view to further and better integrating children's services, the Scottish Executive undertook a review, which reported in *For Scotland's Children* in 2001 that all children's services should be considered as part of a single system (Cohen, 2003:239; Scottish Executive, 2001). A Ministerial Task Force and Cabinet sub-committee were established to facilitate "joined up" children's services.

One ECEC policy measure which has aided the integration of education and care is the New Community Schools programme (Cohen, 2003:241). The New Community Schools, taking a lifelong learning approach, link to or host services for child care and pre-school as well as school-aged child care and adult education.

Childcare Tax Credit is available in Scotland as it is in England. Scotland has its own Sure Start program which brings education, social work, health and voluntary

organisations together targeting those areas with the greatest need. There has been a significant increase in services for children before school age (Cohen, 2003: 242).

#### *Northern Ireland*

In April 1998, the Minister for Education, Health and Social Services announced that the Pre-school Education Expansion Programme would begin; aiming to ensure that pre-school education was available to all children in the year immediately preceding their enrolment in primary school (Worthington, 1998). Mirroring the English roll-out of Sure Start, the programme was to start with the most disadvantaged areas, providing 12.5 hours of pre-school a week for 38 weeks each year.

Despite the additional child care provided by Sure Start, Northern Ireland continued to have one of the lowest rates of child care provision in the UK (NICCY, 2004: 129). Six years later, the Northern Ireland Government undertook to review pre-school education. Following this the Government moved Sure Start and other ECEC programmes to be co-located with pre-school services in the Department of Education (2006: 3).

As in the other UK countries, Northern Ireland developed a ten year strategy, *Our Children and Young People: Our Pledge*, which announced new child care places and an extension of Sure Start into new locations with expanded programmes, including the incorporation of day care (OFMDFM, 2006).

#### *Wales*

The bilingual nature of Wales shaped the notion early childhood services differently from the other UK states, due to recognition that access to Welsh language education in the early years greatly facilitates Welsh language development, especially for children of parents who are not fluent in Welsh (Wincott, 2006: 284). Early years education in Welsh is seen as an important basis for later bilingual education.

In 2001, the Welsh Assembly Government decided to review the operation of the UK *National Childcare Strategy in Wales*. The resulting document, the *Childcare Action Plan*, set out a commitment to providing education and care for children through a children's centre in each local authority area (WAG, 2002: 4). The *Childcare Action Plan* also acknowledged the importance of child care for business, both as a business in its own right and as a means by which parents could meet their responsibilities to care and to their workplace (WAG, 2002:2). Building on the *Childcare Action Plan*, the *National Childcare Strategy in Wales: Childcare is for Children* located the provision of child care within the modern welfare state, and so being available to all parents who need it (DfTE, 2005). The strategy also reinforced a commitment to a complimentary diversity of players in child care delivery, government, private and voluntary provision.

Following a review of Sure Start and existing programmes in Wales, Sure Start was amalgamated with the Childcare Strategy into a new version of the Children and Youth Support Fund; renamed *Cymorth - the Children and Youth Support Fund* (Sure Start, Wales). Under this programme, each local authority was to provide at least one integrated children's centre.

## **ECEC provision and administration**

### *Auspices*

As noted above, child care and early childhood education are among the policy matters devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. English ECEC services are the responsibility of the UK Government. As part of the *Every Child Matters* agenda, the Government brought education and care services for children together, locating responsibility for both under the auspices of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2004: 1). In June 2007, the DfES was renamed the Department for Children, Schools and Families, further cementing the co-location of responsibility for care and education services for children and for the first time signalling the importance of families (DCSF, 2007: About Us).

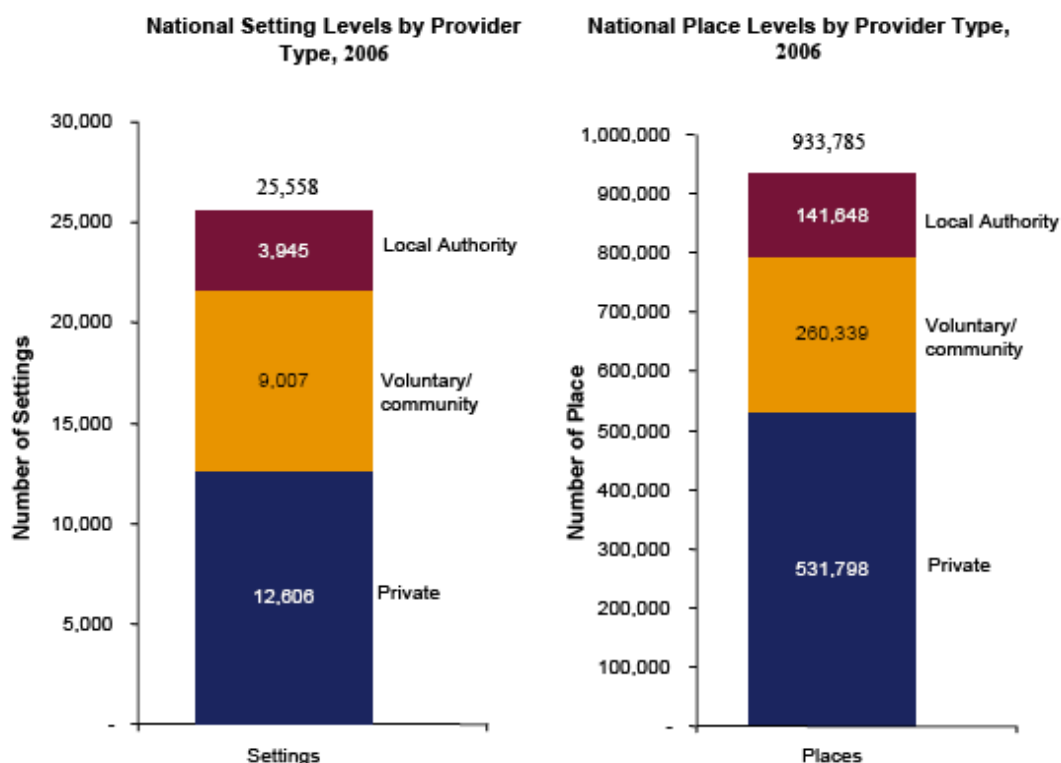
Much of the responsibility for the administration of ECEC services lies with local authorities; this is the case in England, but also other UK countries. In England, for example, as mentioned above, the Childcare Act 2006 was a significant development in ECEC policy in England. The Act made more aspects of ECEC the responsibility of local authorities, in particular: improving the outcomes for pre-school children and as ensuring there was enough child care for parents in employment or training (Sure Start, The Childcare Act).

Sure Start provides an example of the complexity and multiplicity of agencies involved in ECEC development and implementation. In England, as noted above, Sure Start is now Sure Start Children's Centres and is the responsibility of the UK Government Department for Children, Schools and Families. In Northern Ireland, Sure Start programmes are locally managed; in Scotland, the programme is known Sure Start Scotland and comes under the auspices of the Children, Young People and Social Care Group of the Scottish Executive; in Wales Sure Start was incorporated into Cymorth which is administered by Children and Young Peoples' Partnerships in each local authority (Sure Start, What We Do).

### *Key providers*

Although the UK Government has engaged with ECEC service administration to an unprecedented degree, it retained a commitment to maintaining a market of service, but introduced recognition of limitations in the market's ability to provide care in all areas of need, most notably those most disadvantaged.

The private sector is a significant provider of child care in England. Figure 7.1 demonstrates that whether examined by the number of centres or the number of places offered, the private sector represented about half of child care provision in 2006, followed by voluntary and community organisations and then local authorities (these figures exclude out of school care, child minding and crèches) (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2006: 21). No one provider dominated the market; the largest provider, Nord Anglia supplied 9,762 places in 101 settings, or 1.4 per cent of the market; this group was listed on the London Stock Exchange (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2006: 23).

**Figure 2.13: English providers of child care: number of centres and number of places**

Source: Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2006:21

Private providers tended to offer more places at any one setting than voluntary or local authority centres, as is reflected in the above figure. On average, private organisations provided 42 places per setting, voluntary and community 29 places and local authorities 36 places. Some of the largest private providers offered around 100 places in a single setting (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2006: 21).

In the national evaluation of the National Nurseries Initiative, operating in England, private nurseries constituted 40 per cent of all nurseries (Smith, 2007b: 103). Many expanded the size of established nurseries using funding made available through the initiative. Smith notes, however, that although private nurseries dominated numerically they were less likely than voluntary, maintained or joint nurseries<sup>15</sup> to be in the most disadvantaged areas.

Other data shows that private providers dominate the provision of full day care. However, in 2005 private groups represented a smaller proportion of providers than they had in 2001, falling from 81 per cent to 60 per cent (Daycare Trust, 2006: 11-12). In contrast, the voluntary sector grew from 5 per cent to 20 per cent of providers. Local authorities and schools also came to constitute a greater proportion of providers. Contrary to concern in the media about private centres closing, the Daycare Trust argued that the rate at which full day care centres closed had fallen

15 A maintained nursery is public sector run and managed by the local authority. Joint nurseries are operated by collaborations between different sectors.

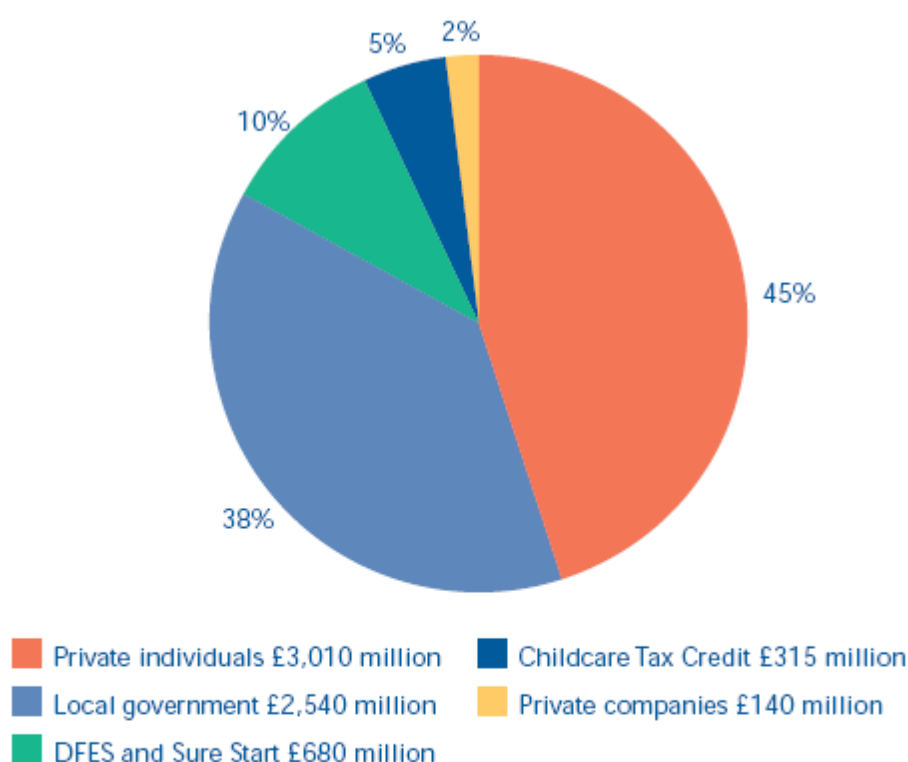
from 2001 to 2005. The trust further observed that some private centre closures were a result of their failure to comply with quality standards.

Early years education for three year olds most often occurs in for profit or voluntary settings (55 per cent of three year old children in 2005), whereas four year olds most often attend maintained nursery or primary school settings (79 per cent) (National Statistics and DfES, 2007: 1-2).

#### *Funding mechanisms*

OECD, *Education at a Glance*, reported that UK public and private spending on children aged 3 years and over in pre-primary education was 0.4 per cent of GDP, just below the OECD average of 0.5 per cent (OECD, 2007c: 206). Funding ECEC services has been a primary mode of intervention by the UK Government in order to maintain affordability, through funding for places (funding tied to quality), creating universal free places and by subsidising fees to low and middle income families (Butt et al., 2007: 6; Purcal and Fisher, 2006:51).

Parents make a substantial financial contribution to ECEC in the UK. In 2002-03 parents were the greatest contributors towards the total cost of ECEC services for their children, paying 45 per cent of all costs, more than £3 billion (see Figure 7.2 below) (NAO, 2004; 3). The majority of government funding is directed towards local authorities through earmarked grants, for example, the Nursery Education Grant which funds the provision of free part-time pre-school places (NAO, 2004; 4). Central government and local authorities' own contributions both increased since 1998. Together, they constituted 38 per cent of all contributions towards the 2002-03 cost of ECEC. The UK Government also contributed funding toward providing places for children and other initiatives, this component contributed 10 per cent to the total cost of ECEC.

**Figure 2.14: Contributions to ECEC provision**

Source NAO, 2004: 10

Tax credits, the primary measure through which to reduce the cost of child care for low income families, were first introduced in 1998 as the Childcare Tax Credit and were received alongside the Working Families Tax Credit (Butt et al., 2007). In 2002-03, the Childcare Tax Credit was combined with the Working Families Tax Credit to create the new Working Tax Credit which has a dedicated child care component (NAO, 2004: 34). Parents working at least 16 hours per week can claim up to 80 per cent of child care costs (Directgov, 2008d). Although the Working Tax Credit is delivered through the pay roll, the child care component is paid directly to the main carer. The forms of child care service for which Working Tax Credit can be claimed are registered day care and childminders, out of school hours clubs on school grounds, out of school child care delivered by an approved provider and in home care provided by registered child care workers. Parents who are studying full-time can claim the Childcare Grant for up to 85 per cent of the cost of care (NAO, 2004; 35).

In April 2006, the maximum child care component that could be claimed was £140 a week for one child and £240 for two children (Daycare Trust, 2006: 22). The Childcare Tax Credit is means tested, so that for a family with one child, a family with an income of up to £20,544 could claim the maximum Tax Credit, but above that level of income the amount of the Tax Credit for which a family is eligible gradually decreases to £0 at an income of £40,220.

Himmelweit and Land (2007: 19) maintained that all these measures, including direct payments and tax credits, were regarded primarily as a means of stimulating the child care market which, it was assumed will deliver value for money through competition.

They noted that informal care, such as that provided by relatives, is generally excluded from financial assistance.

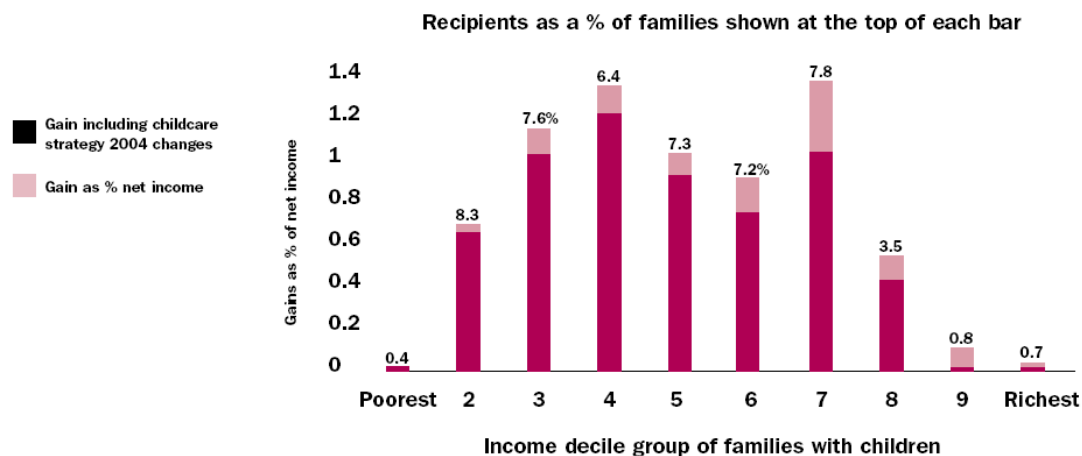
### *Affordability*

The cost of child care in the UK has been rising faster than inflation. A Daycare Trust (2006: 20-21) survey found that the cost of a full time place in an English nursery increased by 27 per cent from 2001 to 2007, surpassing inflation by nearly 20 per cent. Increases in child care costs beyond inflation occurred in other UK countries too, with those in Wales being the highest in 2006.

Overall, in 2005 families spent an average of 11 per cent of their income on child care for children of both school age and younger (Butt et al., 2007: 85). However, there was considerable variation, couple families spent 10 per cent compared to 16 per cent among lone parent families, and the highest income quintile spent 8 per cent compared to 20 per cent in the lowest quintile. When parents were asked about how they perceived the affordability of child care, their responses reflected these disparities. Lone parents, low income families and black families were all more likely to report that they found it difficult or very difficult to pay for child care.

In 2004, 11 per cent of parents did not use child care because they could not afford to do so, up from 7 per cent in 2001. The increased costs occurred at the same time as significant new subsidies were made available: including universal free pre-school for three year olds, increased eligibility for the child care component of the Working Tax Credit and an increase in the value of the benefit (Butt et al., 2007: 88). Moreover, 20 per cent of families who had children aged less than five years said child care was unaffordable. Families with three or more children aged 0-14 years (19 per cent) and families with an income of less than £10,000 per year (17 per cent) were also more likely than others to find child care too costly (Bryson et al., 2006: 169,172).

While the child care component of the Working Tax Credit is intended to help reduce child care costs, it is claimed by only a small proportion of UK parents, between 3 and 5 per cent (Butt et al. 2007: 89). The following figure shows that distribution of the child care component of the Working Tax Credit did not flow to families with the lowest incomes because they did not meet the 16 hour employment requirement, instead the benefits were concentrated among middle income families (see Figure 2.11) (Alakeson, 2005: 27).

**Figure 2.15: Distributional Impact of the Childcare Element of the Working Tax Credit**

Source: Alakeson, 2005: 27

Despite the availability of 12.5 hours per week of free pre-school, more than a quarter of families who were using less than their full quota reported that they paid a fee (Butt et al., 2007: 81). Some providers argued that government funding was insufficient to cover the cost of 12.5 hours of pre-school and so they needed to top-up the fee or only offer the 12.5 hours as part of a larger package. In response to this situation, a new Code of Practice was introduced in 2006 mandating that parents should not be charged in any way for the free pre-school entitlement. Despite the Code of Practice, anecdotal reports suggest that parents continue to be charged for their free entitlement (Hill, 2008).

#### *Access to ECEC services*

ECEC places increased dramatically in the ten years from 1997. The UK government claimed to have increased the number of child care places in England by 90 per cent from 1997 to 2006 in addition to providing universal early years education places (Bryson et al., 2006: 246).

In 2007, 98 per cent of three and four year old children were participating in early years education in England; that is 96 per cent of three year olds and close to 100 per cent of four year olds<sup>16</sup> (National Statistics and DfES, 2007: 1-2). A survey of parents in England found that 86 per cent of 3-4 year olds used formal ECEC services in the previous week and 35 per cent of 0-2 year olds (Bryson et al., 2006: 41). The high rates of use among 3 and 4 year olds related primarily to their participation in early years education settings.

ECEC use is becoming more frequent and more likely to be formal than previously (Daycare Trust, 2006: 7). Although the proportion of children using care in the previous year did not increase substantially from 1999 to 2004, the proportion using

16 Children are counted twice if they take up a position at more than one provider.

care in the previous week did rise, as did the proportion using formal services (up from 31 per cent in 2001 to 41 per cent in 2004).

Another survey of English parents, with children of pre-school age, found that a quarter said they had needed but not been able to find and use child care in the previous year (NAO, 2004: 28). Most unmet demand was for weekday working hours, but there was also a need for child care in evenings and on weekends. Lone parents were more likely to report an unmet need for out-of-hours care than other families. Unmet child care needs had a geographical element, being more common in London than other parts of England.

Bryson et al. (2006: 143) asked English parents whether they thought there were sufficient formal care places available in their local area. Forty per cent said there was about the right number and a similar proportion (41 per cent) said there were not enough places. Parents were most likely to report problems with child care when they worked in the early hours of the morning, evenings or on weekends, lone parents particularly struggled with child care at these times (Bryson et al., 2006: 141).

#### *Licensing, regulation*

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) has been responsible for inspecting English nurseries since it was established in 1998. In 2001, following the introduction of the *Care Standards Act 2000*, this responsibility extended to childminding and day care, which had previously been the responsibility of local authorities (NAO, 2004: 18; Ofsted, 2007a: 6). A new version of Ofsted, named the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, was launched in July 2007, bringing four inspectorates under one authority so that now Ofsted inspects and regulates both education services for English people of all ages as well as care services for English children and young people (Ofsted, 2007b). Ofsted regularly inspects ECEC providers to ensure they comply with the National Standards and the foundation stage curriculum (Ofsted, 2007a).

#### *Staff training*

Training and qualification requirements for ECEC staff are detailed in the 2003 National Standards (Ofsted, 2007a: 47). For example, in English full day care settings, the manager is required to hold at least a NVQ Level 3 qualification with 2 years experience; all supervisors are to also have Level 3 qualifications; and at least half of other staff are to be trained at least to Level 2 (Sure Start, 2003: 10-11). NVQ Level 3 is equivalent to the level of education achieved by an 18 year old finishing high school; NVQ Level 2 is equivalent to that of a 16 year old school leaver. In addition, the Foundation Stage Curriculum requires that all ECEC settings that received funds to provide free early years education to 3 and 4 year olds have access to the advice of a qualified teacher (NAO, 2004: 40).

A study of the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative in 2004-05 in found that only 2 per cent of centres employed teachers to work with infants and toddlers for more than 10 hours each week (Mathers and Sylva, 2007: 53). By 2005, among full day care, sessional out of school care and childminding settings, 58 per cent of staff had at least a Level 3 qualification, up from 48 per cent in 2003 (Clemens et al., 2006: 2). Three-quarters of staff had some form of relevant qualification. Childminders were

considerably less likely to hold qualifications than other workers, just 43 per cent had a Level 3 qualification or above. Mathers et al. (2007:26) found similar qualification levels among the child care settings attended by 3 year old children. 70 per cent of staff had Level 3 qualifications or more and 78 per cent had a qualified teacher as a manager or working in the room with children.

The UK Government has committed to making the ECEC workforce more professionally qualified (HM Government, 2006: 29). To do so it has developed the status 'early years professional' and set a target of having a graduate leader in every daycare centre by 2015 (Children's Workforce Development Council, nd).

### *Employment conditions*

The ECEC workforce is almost entirely female. In 2006, the proportion of staff which was female ranged from 98 per cent in full day care centres to 91 per cent in nursery and reception classes based in primary schools (Kinnaird et al., 2007: 62). The proportion of staff from black and minority ethnic groups was close to that in the workforce as a whole, around 8 per cent although varying across ECEC settings. Staff with disabilities were rare; accounting for only around 1 per cent across different settings compared to 11 per cent in the UK workforce. Targets are in place to increase the representation in the ECEC workforce of men, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and people aged over 40 years (Rolfe et al., 2003: 1).

Since many ECEC settings only offer part-time hours to children, the majority of the workforce works part-time and many childminders are self-employed (Rolfe et al., 2003: 25). Nursery nurses are the only group of child care workers in which the majority work full-time.

Pay for ECEC workers is low in comparison to other educators. In 2005, the starting hourly rate for teachers was £10.53, for child care workers, the average hourly rate was £6.40 and for a nursery manager £8.80 (Daycare Trust, 2006: 15). Moreover, nursery nurses and childminders earn less per hour than school secretaries and nursing auxiliaries (Hill, 2008).

However, from 2003 to 2005, pay levels for child care workers rose faster than among UK workers as a whole; rising by 16 per cent compared to a 10 per cent among other workers (Clemens et al., 2006:2). Pay rates in early years education settings tends to be higher, with nursery nurses in nursery schools, for example, receiving £9.70 per hour on average (Kinnaird et al., 2007: 65). A survey team which visited a range of ECEC settings reported that the lowest rates of pay tended to be found in for-profit nurseries and that some paid junior staff aged between 18 and 21 were paid a 'development rate' of £3.50 per hour (Rolfe et al., 2003: 38).

Staff turnover was reported to be so high that it threatened the sustainability in the majority of day nurseries and play groups (more than 80 per cent of providers surveyed by the National Audit Office reported this problem) (NAO, 2004: 43).

### **Data sources**

The *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education* (EPPE) and the *Effective Provision of Pre-school and Primary Education* (EPPE 3-11) research projects are funded by the Department for Education and Skills. The former ran from 1997 to 2003 and

concentrated on pre-school education. The sample included 3000 children sampled four times, the first time when they were around 3 years old, again at 5 years, 6 years and 7 years. The EPPE study was designed to assess the effect of pre-school education on cognitive attainment and social and behavioural development in later years. EPPE 3-11 is continuing the study of these children through their primary years (DfES and Institute of Education, 2007). See: <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/schools/ecpe/eppe/>

The *National Minimum Data Set on Social Care* was launched in October 2005 by Skills for Care. The Data Set focuses on the social care sector, the organisations which provide care and their paid and unpaid employees. Data collection began in 2006 and will survey all care providers, both registered and unregistered at the organisational and employee level (Skills for Care, 2007). See: <http://www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk/Default.aspx>

*Millennium Cohort Study* – The Millennium Cohort Study first collected data in June 2001 on 18,819 babies around 9 months old living in the UK. A second wave of the study was conducted when the children were around 3 years old and a third wave in 2006 when they were entering primary school. The study is managed by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies and collects data regarding health, education, employment and parenting (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2006). See: <http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/studies.asp?section=000100020001>

*Childcare and Early Years Survey* was first carried out in 2004 by National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) funded by the Department for Education and Skills. The Survey was developed by merging two other surveys previously implemented by NatCen, Parents' Demand for Childcare and Parents of Three and Four Year Old Children. Approximately 8,000 parents in England and Wales were surveyed about types of formal and informal child care the families uses, the relationship between child care and paid employment and demand for child care, particularly in atypical hours (NatCen, 2007). See: [http://www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/or\\_familiesandchildren.htm](http://www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/or_familiesandchildren.htm)

NatCen also administered the *Local Childcare Markets* survey, a longitudinal study first conducted in 2003 and repeated in 2004. The survey was designed to examine the operation of child care markets and its relation to government policy (NatCen, 2007). See: [http://www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/or\\_familiesandchildren.htm](http://www.natcen.ac.uk/natcen/pages/or_familiesandchildren.htm)

**Timeline**

1997	Labour elected to UK government	
1998	<i>Meeting the Childcare Challenge</i> green paper sets out the National Childcare Strategy <i>Sure Start</i> launched Free entitlement to education for all four year olds for 12.5 hours per week for 33 weeks per year. <i>Pre-school Education Expansion Programme</i> to extend pre-school education to all children in the year before primary school. <i>Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy in Scotland</i> includes a commitment to provide free pre-school for all four year olds. <i>New Community Schools</i> program pilot. <i>Child Care Tax Credit</i> announced	England England England Northern Ireland Scotland Scotland UK
1999	<i>Sure Start Local Programmes</i> start operating <i>Helping the Family in Scotland</i> expands free pre-school to include three year olds. Child care and education brought together in the one agency, the Scottish Executive Education Department	England Scotland Scotland
2000	<i>Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiatives</i> announced <i>Childcare Standards Act</i> introduces quality standards for child care providers	England England
2001	<i>Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiatives</i> implementation begins <i>For Scotland's Children</i> proposes better integrated children's services	England Scotland
2002	<i>Delivering for Children and Families: The Interdepartmental Childcare Review</i> Creation of <i>Sure Start Children's Centres</i> announced <i>Foundation Stage Curriculum</i> established for children from three years old to school age. <i>The Childcare Action Plan</i> commits to the establishment of Children's Centres in local authority.	England England England Wales
2003	<i>Every Child Matters</i> and <i>Every Child Matters: Change for Children</i> published Cymorth: The Children and Youth Support Fund established incorporating <i>Sure Start</i> and the <i>Childcare Strategy</i> .	England Wales
2004	<i>Children Act</i> brings education, health and welfare services for children together under the responsibility of a director for children's services. Also creates local planning and inspections. <i>Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare</i> released. Expansion of <i>Children's Centres</i> announced Department for Education and Skills <i>Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners</i> released. Free entitlement for all three year olds available nationally	England England England England England
2005	<i>National Childcare Strategy in Wales: Childcare is for Children</i> treated childcare as a welfare state entitlement of parents.	Wales

2006	<i>Childcare Act</i> removes the legal distinction between education and child care	England
	Free entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds extended to 12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks per year.	England
	Announcement that Sure Start and other ECEC programs to be co-located in the Department of Education	Northern Ireland
	Our Children and Young People: Our Pledge, Northern Ireland ten year strategy	Northern Ireland

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